

**THE UNION BLOCKADE: A MEDICAL PERSPECTIVE**

# **NORTH & SOUTH**

**THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE CIVIL WAR SOCIETY**

**VOLUME 8 • NUMBER 3**

## **THE BATTLE OF SELMA**

**Jerry Keenan**

## **THE BATTLE OF NASHVILLE**

**Pat Brennan**

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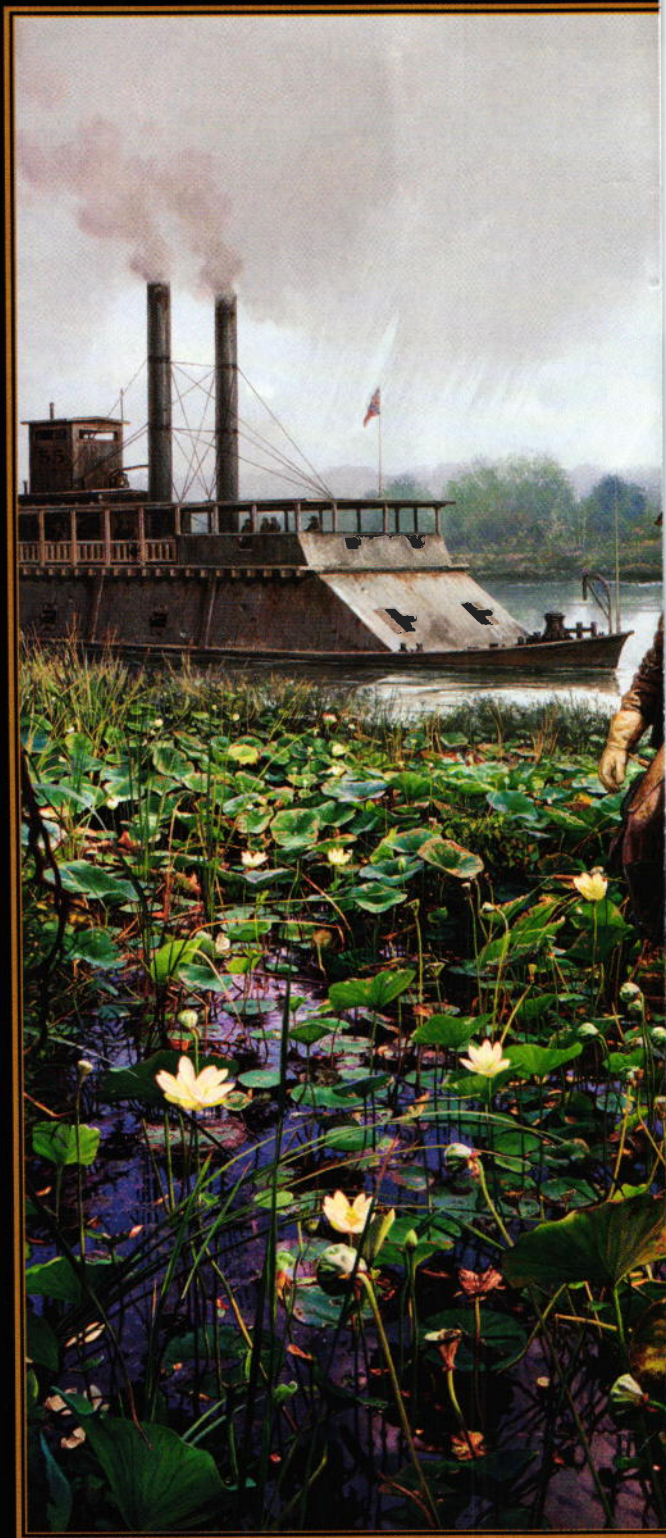


It seemed that nothing could stop the audacious Major General Nathan Bedford Forrest and his cavalry command. Federal naval officers were not taught to be on guard for an attack from a cavalry unit in the USN training manual. Forrest's military genius however, did not come from any army manual. He had a natural instinct for tactics and unconventional warfare, coupled with a bold and aggressive personality.

Three weeks after General Sherman's capture of Atlanta, Forrest and his Corps were wreaking havoc on Federal garrisons, taking 2,360 prisoners and destroying much of the Tennessee & Alabama Railroad north to Pulaski. Returning to west Tennessee, Forrest turned his attention to the United States Navy who was using the Tennessee River as a supply route for Atlanta.

With the help of Forrest's ever-faithful commanders, General James R. Chalmers, Colonel Tyree H. Bell with his Tennesseans, and Colonel Edward W. Rucker, a deadly gauntlet of artillery was set up near Paris Landing commanding a mile stretch of the river. They didn't have to wait long for the unsuspecting enemy. After two days of vigorous engagements, the Confederates had captured the gunboat *U.S.S. Undine*, and the transports *Cheeseman*, *Mazeppa* and *Venus*, the latter two each towing barges richly laden with valuable supplies. The *Cheeseman* was badly damaged and burned along with the now emptied barges. The *Undine* was one of the largest armor clad boats of her class with eight twenty-four-pound brass howitzers. With some repairs the gunboat was placed back in action. On the 31<sup>st</sup> Forrest decided to organize his own navy arming the *Undine* and *Venus* with more guns and sending them to do battle with the Federal flotilla at Johnsonville. Forrest's success on the river caused the panic-stricken Yankees to destroy and evacuate the huge Johnsonville depot on the 4th of November.

As rain clouds began to cover the autumn Tennessee skies, General Forrest congratulated General Chalmers for their success. Draped across the General's saddle was the flag of the *U.S.S. Undine*, a very rare prize indeed. His new gunboats and "Horse Marines" cruised the Tennessee river hearing the cheers of men who had not seen a Confederate flag on a ship for two years, "making the air ring with cheer upon cheer."



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# *The Horse Marines*

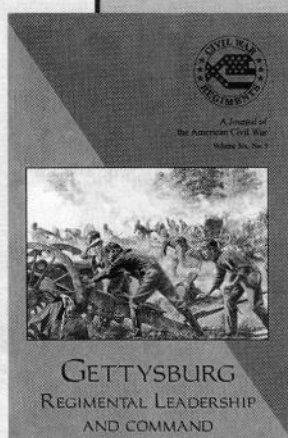
B. Forrest, J.R. Chalmers and the captured U.S.S. Undine  
Paris Landing, Tennessee – October 31, 1864

by

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# NORTH & SOUTH

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While Northern and Southern armies battled in the field, Northern and Southern lithographers battled on the outside of envelopes, creating some of the most colorful and powerfully charged images the nation had ever seen. —*Stephen Berry*

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Fresh from its bloody defeat at the Battle of Franklin, Confederate general John Bell Hood's battered Army of Tennessee faced off in a rematch with Union general George Thomas' Army of the Cumberland on the outskirts of Nashville, Tennessee, on December 15-16, 1864. The result was decisive. —*Patrick Brennan*

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Early in the war, a growing number of militant pro-war northern civilians—frustrated by military defeats and delays, as well as the conciliatory policies of moderate politicians in Washington—pushed for the waging of a more aggressive conflict. The only way to reconstruct the nation successfully, they believed, was to begin by thoroughly crushing the rebellion. —*Silvana R. Siddali*

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Days before Robert E. Lee's surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia, Union forces under Major General James Harrison Wilson attacked the key industrial center of Selma, Alabama, where Confederate defenses were directed by the infamous rebel horseman Nathan Bedford Forrest. —*Jerry Keenan*

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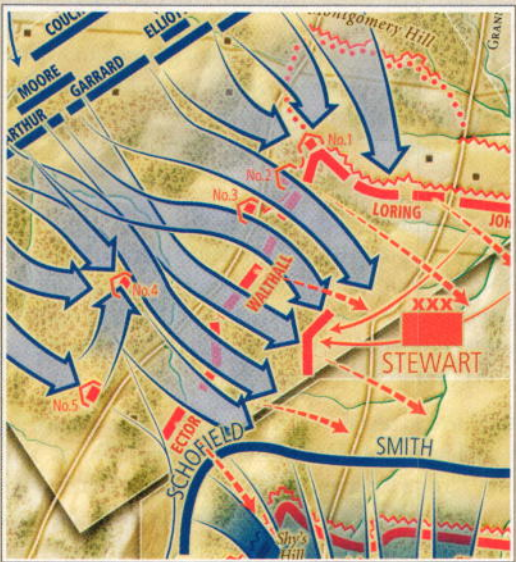
The effectiveness of the Union blockade of southern ports has long been debated. An examination of the blockade from a medical perspective yields interesting answers as to its potency. —*Michael A. Flannery*

## DEPARTMENTS

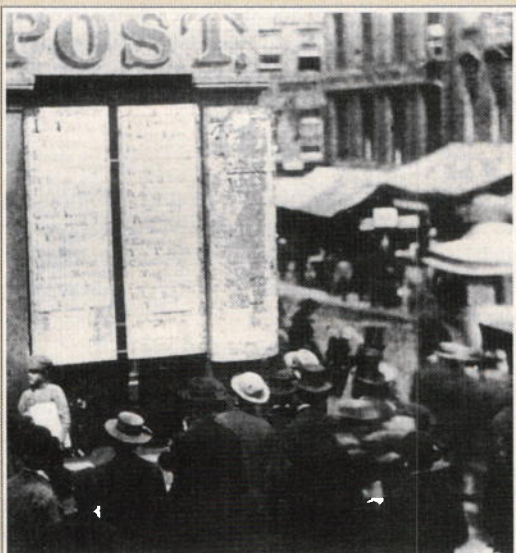
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"Jeff. Davis' Coat of 'ALMS.'"  
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December 15-16, 1864, map detail.  
("The Battle of Nashville" page 20)



Citizens read casualty lists posted by the  
New York Evening Post Bulletin.  
("Must We Not Punish to Conquer?" page 46)



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# Editorial

## MAIL CALL

### SOLDIERS LOVE TO GET MAIL—ABSOLUTELY LOVE IT.

A letter received from home brings news about family and friends. Hometown papers relay details of events of national and local interest. Care packages contain welcome treats to supplement military fare or other much-needed personal items. Mail, in short, holds great significance to the soldier—it can break boredom and lift spirits; it preserves, in a very real sense, a connection to the life that was left behind.

The above is as true today as it was 140 years ago. While the telephone, computer, and vastly improved postal system make communication with home much easier for the American soldier of the twenty-first century, such communication was no less important to Billy Yank or Johnny Reb. Soldiers' letters from the front lines—then and now—tell us as much.

Recently, we were surprised and exceedingly pleased to receive a letter from an American currently serving in Iraq—First Lieutenant James Crabtree of the 1st Battalion/23rd Marines, an infantry regiment of reservists from Texas. It reads as follows:

Dear *North & South*,

I want to tell you what a great magazine you are and how much the Marines of our reserve infantry battalion here in Iraq love to read your publication. We only have a couple of well read copies that have been passed around. If you could spare a few extra copies we'd really appreciate it. Thank you.

Lt. Crabtree

We are grateful to Lieutenant Crabtree for his kind words. To him and all other men and women in the U.S. armed forces, and especially those currently in harm's way, let me say, on behalf of us all at *North & South*, that we keep you in our thoughts and look forward to the time that you are home, safe and sound.

As to the lieutenant's request for copies of *N&S*, we would be happy to oblige. Past attempts on our part to arrange for back issues to be sent blindly to Iraq have met with failure, and we could use our soldiers' advice. So, for those of you overseas who would like to see *N&S*, please get in touch. (See the masthead for our office mailing address, or send me an email at: tjohnston@northandsouthmagazine.com).

★ ★ ★

Speaking of overseas readers of *North & South*, beginning this spring, all copies sent to international subscribers will get to their destinations much more quickly—in many cases, weeks faster—the result of a new shipment policy on the part of our printer, Cadmus Specialty Publications.

★ ★ ★

Finally, per the request of *N&S* associate editor Pat Brennan, whose article on the Battle of Nashville begins on page 20, here are a few important words that didn't make it into his sidebar regarding preservation (see pages 42-43): "For those interested, the Battle of Nashville Preservation Society can be contacted via their web site, www.bonps.org."

*Terry Johnston*





# Crossfire

## DANIEL SICKLES

While I greatly enjoyed Stephen Sears' article "General Meade and the Second Battle of Gettysburg" [*North & South*, vol. 8, no. 1], I feel that he was far too harsh in his treatment of Daniel Sickles. While I will not defend Sickles' vindictive campaign against Meade's reputation in the aftermath of the battle, I feel that Sickles had some right to feel aggrieved. Much has been written about Sickles' unauthorized decision to advance the III Corps from Cemetery Ridge out to the Wheat Field, Peach Orchard, and Emmitsburg Road, but virtually nothing is said about the true background for this move. While Meade, Hancock, and other senior Federal commanders were focused on Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill on the Union right and center, Daniel Sickles was apparently the only Federal commander on the field who was aware that Robert E. Lee was up to mischief on the left flank of the Army of the Potomac, and that the Round Tops were at risk. Sickles felt that the rebel assault would come directly from Seminary Ridge, which he knew was occupied by the rebels, and his move to higher ground in front of Little Round Top was in response to this fear. How was he to know that the Confederates would be able to move two divisions of infantry several miles south of the Union left flank in open country and assail his position from front and flank without being detected? Where was Meade's cavalry while this mass movement of rebel troops was taking place? That Longstreet's attack came as a complete surprise to the Federals was the direct result of Meade's utter incompetence in properly guarding both his flanks. Meade must have known that Lee's signature calling card was the flank attack, as was demonstrated quite forcefully during the Seven Days, Second Manassas, and Chancellorsville battles, yet his left flank was exposed! This was certainly not the fault of Daniel Sickles.

Also, I was upset by Sears' claim that Longstreet "wrecked" Sickles' exposed III Corps. The III Corps' performance at Gettysburg has, in my view, been unfairly maligned by historians for far too long. Sickles' men held their position for several hours against superior numbers and under intense artillery fire, beating back a number of Confederate attacks and inflicting heavy losses on the divisions of Hood and McLaws. True, the III Corps eventually gave way and suffered severe casualties, but it was far from "wrecked," and its heroic stand enabled Meade to rush in reinforcements and limit Confederate gains to ground they would have occupied anyway had Sickles remained on Cemetery Ridge where Meade had wanted him. I might also add here that when Longstreet saw Sickles' advanced position directly in Hood's front, he asked Lee to postpone the attack. Apparently Longstreet did not regard Sickles' position as quite so exposed and vulnerable as do some historians.

would Sears be saying about Sickles' performance at Chancellorsville then?

—Dennis Middlebrooks, Brooklyn, New York  
STEPHEN SEARS RESPONDS:

I've extensively examined (with extensive documentation) Dan Sickles' role as corps commander in my books *Chancellorsville* (1996) and *Gettysburg* (2003), and I refer Mr. Middlebrooks to them for a detailed response to his letter.

But to respond briefly here: At Chancellorsville Sickles fumbled an opportunity to take Jackson's trains and thereby cripple his flank march, then misread events and announced that the Confederates were retreating. At Gettysburg it was Pleasonton who witlessly sent off Buford's cavalry and did not replace them, leaving the Federal left uncovered. Whatever Sickles' concerns, he blatantly disobeyed orders by advancing to a clearly untenable position, and did so without notice to anyone. Of course the III Corps fought bravely,

but that in the end it was indeed wrecked was due entirely to Sickles' misadventuring.

Let us give Frank Haskell, a hero of Gettysburg, the last word on Dan Sickles: his "bad conduct" on July 2 was "so gross, and came so near being the cause of irreparable disaster, that I cannot discuss it with moderation."



## CONFEDERATE DESERTION

I enjoyed Mark Weitz's article ["A Justifiable Crime: Desertion in the Confederate Army," *North & South*, vol. 8, no. 1] and I look forward to reading his book on Confederate desertion, which I hope answers some of the questions that have occurred to me. For example, in *The Confederate War*, Gary Gallagher has suggested (I think convincingly) that desertion in the Army of Northern Virginia has been overrated as a major factor in Confederate defeat. He points out that at Chancellorsville Lee had about 61,000 men, and that a year later the

Army of Northern Virginia contained some 65,000 troops. In the spring of 1865 Lee had just under 60,000 troops before the retreat to Appomattox, indicating that desertion was perhaps less crippling than many historians have argued. Is Gallagher completely mistaken? I was also curious to know if Dr. Weitz found any differences between desertion in the Army of Tennessee and the Army of Northern Virginia? What, if any, variations are found in terms of desertion rates and how the offense was treated when North and South are compared? Finally, is it plausible or even provable

As for Sickles' performance at Chancellorsville, which Sears sneeringly dismisses, it was Sickles who observed Jackson on his flank march and ordered a reconnaissance in force, resulting in the capture of a Confederate regiment and Sickles' learning from prisoners about Jackson's turning movement. This information was conveyed to General Hooker, who chose to ignore it and assume Jackson was retreating. Had he acted on the information Sickles provided, as Grant certainly would have, he could have destroyed the Army of Northern Virginia, which was split into three parts. What

## WE WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS

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that a division or two of would-be deserters could have compensated for or offset the weaknesses found in Confederate political leaders like Jefferson Davis and major military leaders such as Braxton Bragg?

—Jay Gillispie  
Sampson Community College

#### MARK WEITZ RESPONDS:

I thank Mr. Gillispie for his letter and I am pleased he enjoyed the piece. While I do not suggest that Professor Gallagher is “completely” mistaken, part of the problem with addressing desertion is that people tend to believe we are judging the commitment and valor of those who stayed, based on the actions and sentiments of those who did not. The Army of Northern Virginia fought valiantly throughout the war, but the fact that its numbers remained somewhat constant does not take into account the difference in “who” was there. The numbers could be the same or close, yet few people would argue the ANV of 1862 was the same army that surrendered three years later. Death took many, but desertion played its part. Desertion took good soldiers, not just slackers, and those who replaced them could not always compensate for the experience these men took with them when they left, nor maintain the unit cohesion developed through the shared combat experience. My book (*More Damning than Slaughter: Desertion in the Confederate Army*, due out this October) also explores other ways in which desertion hurt the Confederate war effort aside from the simple decrease in numbers. The propensity of Confederate deserters to prey upon Southern civilians, the manpower drain required to hunt these men down and return them, and the way state governors used the problem to withhold men from Confederate service are but a few of the ways desertion hurt the Confederacy.

As for differences between the Confederacy's two main armies, the Army of Tennessee seemed more willing to take advantage of the Union desertion program. It also appears that desertion became a problem earlier out West than it did in the East. As far as comparing the two sides, the North had around 200,000 deserters, about twice the traditional number attributed to the South. However, in my experience, comparisons between North and South yielded little useful insight. Even with half the actual numbers, desertion hurt the Confederacy more than its adversary. The South had little if any margin for error in the conflict. The North not only enjoyed a vastly greater white population from which to draw an army, but was able to put over 180,000 African Americans into the service. Thus, while desertion for the Union posed a problem, it did not seriously threaten its ability to wage war.

Could a stronger army have overcome serious leadership flaws? As Mr. Gillispie suggests,

it is difficult to prove. However, as the book points out, no one factor led to Confederate defeat; rather, many factors, including poor leadership in key places, worked to undermine the Confederate war effort. If one believes that defeat came on the battlefield, then desertion played an important role in the defeat of an army that needed every able-bodied man. Desertion took more than a couple of divisions, affected the morale of those who did not desert, and occupied a considerable amount of the government's energy at the local, state, and Confederate level, trying to control the problem.

#### READABILITY

I would suspect most of your readers are senior citizens (I am sixty-eight). We sometimes find it difficult to read on shaded backgrounds due to declining eyesight. See, for example, “The 96th Illinois” in Vol 8, # 2. Thanks.

—Martin Feeney, via email

ED.: Thanks for bringing this to our attention.



Pages from Dave Powell's “The 96th Illinois and the Battles for Horseshoe Ridge, 1863 and 1895.”

#### THE 96TH ILLINOIS

I enjoyed reading Dave Powell's article on the 96th Illinois and Horseshoe Ridge [“The 96th Illinois and the Battles for Horseshoe Ridge, 1863 and 1895,” *N&S*, vol. 8, no. 2]. I have studied Chickamauga for many years, in particular that part of the battle, in which I have a deep personal interest. One of my ancestors was in the 40th Ohio, and although he died in Bridgeport, Alabama, a week before the fight, many young men from his community and a few of his relatives took part in the battle.

The two regiments I most associate with the 40th are the 84th Indiana and the 96th Illinois. They were together for most of the brigade's major actions and movements from Tullahoma through the fall of Atlanta. Anyway, what I want to say is that I was happy to see a regiment such as the 96th the subject of a serious article. Like many Union regiments in the western theatre, it stayed in the field through many hardships—suffering little if any desertion—marched all over the South in often miserable conditions, and delivered the victories that won the Civil War. Only recently have some of these units been receiving the

attention that they deserve, and thanks to you the 96th is one of them.

—Mike Keefer  
Columbia, Maryland

\* \* \*

I have been buying *North & South* off the rack for quite a while, but after reading Volume 8, Number 2, I have become a subscriber. I think your magazine is great and I read every issue cover to cover. The current issue is no exception, and I would especially like to thank Dave Powell for his excellent article about the 96th Illinois at Horseshoe Ridge. His description of the 96th's movements leading up to the fight are truly captivating. I would certainly like to read more from him. When I subscribed online I also picked up a couple of back issues and was wondering if Mr. Powell has written other articles for *North & South*. If so could you let me know what issues and if they are available. Thanks for a great magazine.

—John Murray, New York

ED. Dave's article on the 96th Illinois at Chickamauga was his first for *North & South*. He has written previously for *Gettysburg Magazine* (issue numbers 20, 23, and 28), and tells us that he currently has several projects in the works, including an examination of Major General James Negley's performance at Chickamauga. He also intends to explore the roles that other regiments played at that battle.

#### BLUNDERS

Sorry, John Simon, but I side with Gail Stephens on this one—she couldn't have said it better in “Crossfire,” *N&S*, vol. 8, no. 2 [re: “The Ten Greatest Blunders of the Civil War,” vol. 8, no. 1]. I tell folks that Lew Wallace took the wrong road for the right reasons (or was it the right road for the wrong reasons?). Anyway, he acted appropriately based on the orders (we believe) he had and the best information he could obtain. We can't expect any more than that from any officer; certainly we can't expect clairvoyance.

Many true blunders were committed at Shiloh. My nomination for the most far-reaching one was Albert Sidney Johnston's (perhaps unconscious) act of leaving his personal physician, Dr. Yandell, behind in Prentiss' camp before he took his ultimately fatal leg wound. The arterial wound would have resulted in his losing the leg anyway, and who can say whether the Battle of Shiloh would have gone the other way had he been saved, but his death deprived the Confederacy of its greatest general in the West.

I still agree with many of the respondents that the greatest blunder of the war was the South's opening fire on Fort Sumter.

—Ken Hansgen, Savannah, Tennessee  
(continued on page 87)



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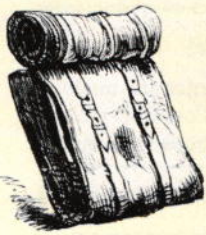
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# Knapsack A CIVIL WAR DIGEST

## FROM THE GRAPEVINE

- On March 15, 1861, Confederate president Jefferson Davis notified the governor of Virginia that he wished to commission Robert E. Lee and Joseph E. Johnston as generals in the Confederate army, though at the time the state had not yet seceded nor had either man resigned from the U.S. Army.
- During most of his campaigns Robert E. Lee had a "pet" hen, named Nell or Nellie, who rode in his headquarters wagon and regularly provided eggs for his breakfast.
- Although generally regarded as a complete amateur when it came to soldiering, prior to the war Benjamin Butler had acquired a reputation as a thinker on military policy, to the extent that in 1839 he was invited to speak on military training at West Point.
- Riding past a field hospital during the Battle of Bull Run, some of the redoubtable troopers in Colonel J.E.B. Stuart's 1st Virginia Cavalry were so overcome by the screams and sights—among them a pile of severed limbs—that several reportedly vomited.
- Of the 267 men who served as members of the Confederate Congress, just twenty-two—8.2 percent—owned no slaves.
- Arriving by ship in San Francisco in 1853, at the height of the "Gold Rush," Brevet Second Lieutenant John B. Hood and several other young officers decided to hire a carriage to take them to their hotel, until they discovered that the fare would be \$20, about ten days' pay, whereupon they opted to walk.
- In May 1861 the Confederacy slashed the pay of military chaplains from \$85.00 to \$50.00 a month because, some members of Congress seem to

We make every effort to check the accuracy of anecdotes published in "Knapsack," but many were written down years after the event and in some cases are undoubtedly folk tales rather than genuine reminiscences.

have argued, the clergymen only had to work one day a week.

- In a White House menagerie rivaled only by that of the Roosevelt children some forty years later, the two youngest Lincoln boys—Willie and Tad—kept as pets rabbits, kittens, a turkey, some ponies, and even a goat, which slept in Tad's bed.
- Governor Zebulon Vance of North Carolina refused to allow the Confederate army's Medical Department to produce medicinal whiskey in his state, because it violated the liquor laws.

## SHORT ROUNDS

### "It's a Miracle . . . !"

There are numerous tales about the ingenuity, inventiveness, and wit of the Civil War soldier—regardless of side. Some of them may even be true, though one often wonders. Consider the following anecdote.

It seems that a soldier—side indeterminate—lost his bayonet. Not wishing to report the loss and have to pay for a replacement, he whittled a reasonable facsimile from wood so that, except upon close inspection, he would *seem* to have his bayonet. The soldier calculated that this expedient would serve until his regiment next went into action, at which time he would have a reasonable chance of picking a real one up from the detritus that inevitably littered every battlefield.

The improvisation worked for a short time. But then came a formal inspection.

Passing along the line of troops, the inspecting officer halted before the soldier in question. Looking him over, the officer asked, "Let me see your bayonet, private."

Thinking quickly, the soldier replied, "Sir, I promised my father I would never draw my bayonet unless I intended to kill with it."

The officer insisted.

Seeing no option, the soldier drew the bogus bayonet from its sheath, while looking skyward and saying, "May the Lord change this bayonet to wood for breaking my vow."

## Generals-at-Law

The law was a very attractive profession in early nineteenth century America. The country needed a lot of lawyers, as commerce and industry expanded and wealth multiplied. Most attorneys did not work in criminal or tort law, but in business law. And lawyering didn't require much of an education.



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North Carolina governor Zebulon Vance

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

### Grant Meets Bismarck

In 1877 Ulysses S. Grant and his wife Julia undertook a world tour. In nearly thirty months they traveled through Europe, the Holy Land, and Egypt, and thence on to India, China, and Japan, before returning to the United States. Everywhere they were accorded enthusiastic receptions by common folk and *prominenti* alike.

Although feted as a war hero as well as a former president of the United States, during the tour Grant constantly spoke of peace as the best way to resolve the problems of the world, and even served as an informal peace envoy between China and Japan.

His attitude was perhaps most publicly stated while in Germany, which he visited while the Congress of Berlin was in progress, a "summit" of the leaders of the Great Powers convened to resolve colonial disputes in Africa. While in Berlin, Grant naturally met with Imperial Chancellor Otto von Bismarck.



***“Blaze away and stand to it boys, remember what they will say of us in Ireland.”***

—Major James Cavanaugh, 69th New York, acting commander of the Irish Brigade, at Antietam.

The most common way to become a lawyer in America at the time was to “read law,” rather than go to law school, of which there were very few in the country. “Reading law” meant spending several years working as a sort-of paralegal for a recognized attorney, or, even better, a judge. At some point, the mentoring attorney would pronounce the candidate fit to take the bar exam. Whether one had read law or gone to a law school, the bar exam was the same. Rather than today’s two- or three-day marathon writing session, it was then more like a dissertation defense. A few attorneys, possibly including the one with whom the candidate had read law, sat around and posed questions and problems, until they were satisfied that the person actually had some mastery of the intricacies of the law. If they were satisfied, they would notify the local bar association or state attorney general, and appropriate certification would be issued.

Surprisingly, fully a quarter of Civil War generals had made their living as

lawyers before the war, and many more had passed the bar but did not practice. Equally surprising, it was the Confederacy that claimed more lawyer-generals than the Union. Of the 425 Confederate generals, almost a third—129 (30.6 percent)—made their living as lawyers before the war, more, in fact, than the 127 (29.9 percent) who made their living in uniform. In contrast, only 126 (21.6 percent) of the 583 Union generals had practiced law before the war, while 197 (33.8 percent) had been active military. These figures only account for men who were making their living as lawyers before the war. Actually, there were quite a number of qualified attorneys among the generals on both sides who had never practiced law, or who were not doing so on the eve of the conflict. As a result, the actual number of generals who were also lawyers is unclear.

On both sides the overwhelming majority of generals had become lawyers by reading law rather than attending law schools. What follows is a sampler of

some of the “generals-at-law” on both sides, whether they had actually ever practiced or not.

**SOME YANKEES**

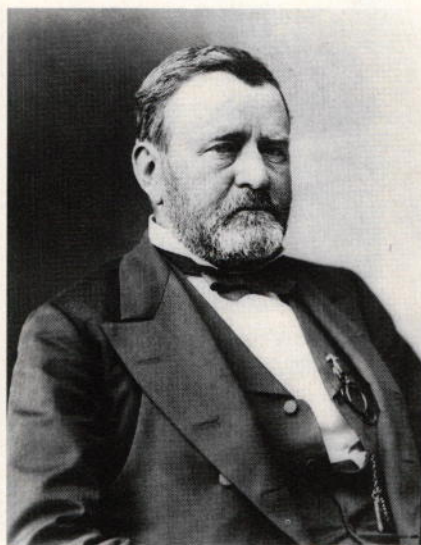
- Major General Nathaniel P. Banks
- Major General Benjamin Butler
- Major General Dan Butterfield
- Major General Jacob Cox
- Major General Henry Halleck
- Brigadier General Rutherford B. Hayes
- Major General Stephen A. Hurlbut
- Major General Phil Kearny
- Major General John A. McClernand
- Major General Benjamin M. Prentiss
- Brevet Lieutenant General Winfield Scott
- Major General William Tecumseh Sherman
- Major General Dan Sickles
- Major General Henry W. Slocum
- Major General Lew Wallace
- Major General W.H.L. Wallace

**SOME REBS**

- Brigadier General William Barskdale
- Major General John C. Breckenridge
- Brigadier General James Chestnut Jr.
- Major General Patrick R. Cleburne
- Major General Howell Cobb
- Major General Jubal A. Early
- Brigadier General Winfield Scott Featherstone
- Brigadier General John B. Floyd
- Brigadier General States Rights Gist
- Major General John B. Gordon
- Brigadier General Thomas Green
- Lieutenant General Wade Hampton
- Brigadier General Joseph B. Kershaw
- Major General William W. Loring
- Major General James J. Pettigrew
- Major General Gideon Pillow
- Major General Sterling Price
- Major General William B. Taliaferro
- Brigadier General Lucius T. Wigfall
- Major General Jones M. Withers

**“No Doubt About it . . . ?”**

During Major General George B. McClellan’s campaigns in 1862, the good general was always complaining that his Army of the Potomac, despite being nearly 120,000 men strong, was heavily outnumbered by the Army of Northern



Otto von Bismarck (left) and Ulysses S. Grant.

The two discussed a number of matters. The subject turned eventually to soldiering and war as an instrument of policy. Grant’s following comment must have surprised Bismarck:

The truth is, I am more of a farmer than a soldier. I take little or no interest in military

affairs; and although I entered the army thirty-five years ago, and have been in two wars—in Mexico as a lieutenant and later in the War of the Rebellion—I never went into the army without regret, and never retired without pleasure.



Virginia, which he claimed numbered upward of 200,000 men, an estimate based, he assured all and sundry, on excellent intelligence.

At a gathering of some notables at the White House one day, the discussion turned to recent reports from the field, in which McClellan once again had cited enormous numbers for the enemy. Some people were beginning to think that McClellan's problem was less an inferiority of numbers than one of guts. Finally, one of those present approached the president and asked, "Mr. Lincoln, how many men do the Confederates have in the field?"

"Twelve hundred thousand," came the swift reply.

The assertion took those present by surprise.

"No doubt about it," the president went on, "twelve hundred thousand. You see, all our generals, every time they get whipped, they tell me that the enemy outnumbered them at least three to one, and I must believe them. We have four hundred thousand men in the field, and three times four equals twelve. Twelve hundred thousand men, no doubt about it."

## Incident at the Quiet House

On March 13, 1862, during operations against New Berne, North Carolina, Brigadier General John G. Foster's First Brigade, of Major General Ambrose Burnside's Department of North Carolina, was being ferried in transports and gunboats up the Neuse River. As the flotilla approached Slocum Creek, the personnel in the lead gunboat, *Pilot Boy*, carrying General Foster and about five hundred men of the 24th Massachusetts, observed a very large house about a mile from the river bank. An elaborate Southern mansion located on a prominent rise, it provided anyone inside an excellent view of the surrounding countryside and traffic along the river.

The house seemed empty, and there were no people around it. In fact, more than one soldier, including Corporal George H. Allen of the 4th Rhode Island, aboard one of the other steamers, thought the scene "too quiet." So too, apparently, did General Foster, and he ordered what would later be termed a "reconnaissance by fire."

As Allen put it, *Pilot Boy* fired at the house, sending a "9-inch round through it, whereupon it promptly disgorged a

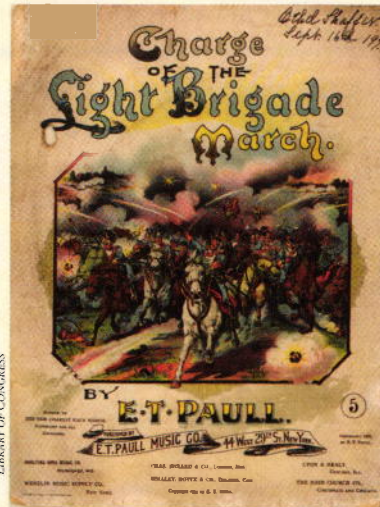
large party of Rebel troops who 'stood not upon the order of their going,' but leaped from windows or any place that seemed to offer exit and fled across the fields."

The brigade then "landed without molestation."

## WAR AND THE MUSES

### The Charge of the Mule Brigade

In the aftermath of the crushing Confederate victory at Chickamauga (September 19, 1863), Union forces fell back on Chattanooga, where they endured a partial siege, sustained only by a very tenuous supply line known as the "Cracker Line," because about the only thing that could be gotten through in sufficient amounts to feed the troops was hardtack. The Confederates, of course, pressed the investment vigorously, and even tried to sever the Cracker Line. The principal Confederate force threatening the line was Lieutenant General James Longstreet's corps of the Army of Northern Virginia. Transferred west in September, the corps had been instrumental in effecting the victory at Chickamauga. In response, two army corps had been dispatched from the Army of the Potomac under Major General Joseph Hooker.



"Charge of the Light Brigade March" (1896 sheet music cover).

For weeks, while the troops in Chattanooga survived on slender rations, Union and Confederate troops maneuvered against each other, the former to maintain and expand the line of supply, the latter to close it off. By late October Hooker's troops had pried the door open a little, capturing Wauhatchie, a small town west of Chattanooga on a bend in the Tennessee River. Hooker's control of Wauhatchie permitted Union steamers to

reach the besieged town. This set the stage for the Battle of Wauhatchie, as Longstreet sought to eject Hooker's men.

Wauhatchie was defended by a division under Brigadier General John W. Geary. Very late on October 28th Confederate brigadier general Micah Jenkins' South Carolina Brigade attacked Geary's lines. The surprise night attack, a rare occurrence in the Civil War, bent Geary's flanks back, but they held.

Meanwhile, some three miles away at Brown's Ferry on the Tennessee, Hooker acted on the sounds of the battle, dispatching two divisions to support Geary. Major General Carl Schurz's division, in the lead, took a wrong turn and got lost in a swamp. While Geary's men fought desperately, Schurz's troops finally managed to extricate themselves from the swamp, only to run into Confederate brigadier general Evander M. Law's brigade of Alabamans, thoughtfully positioned by Longstreet on a convenient hill overlooking the Brown's Ferry-Wauhatchie road. Schurz attacked, and although outnumbered, Law's men were able to take advantage of the naturally strong position to beat off several advances. But then a second Union division came up, under Major General Adolph von Steinwehr. The two Union divisions drove Law's men off the hill at the point of the bayonet and pressed on to Wauhatchie.

Realizing that the game was up, Jenkins ordered his men to withdraw, and the battle ended at about 4:00 a.m. The Confederates had lost thirty-four men killed, 305 wounded, and sixty-nine missing, the Union, seventy-eight killed, 327 wounded, and fifteen missing.

Toward the end of the battle, a curious incident had occurred. Because Wauhatchie was a way station on the Cracker Line, it contained a depot where wagons could change mules. As the battle drew to a close, several hundred mules panicked, broke out of their enclosures, and fled, some of them plunging into the Confederate lines. A rumor soon spread that the stampeding mules had led the rebels to believe that they were under attack by Union cavalry, causing them to fall back. Although U.S. Grant repeated the tale in his memoirs, in truth the "Mule charge" seems to have had no effect on the battle. But it made for a great folktale, and some wags even proposed brevetting the mules as horses. The incident also



prompted an anonymous poet to pen the mock-heroic "The Charge of the Mule-Brigade," in imitation of Alfred Lord Tennyson's famous "The Charge of the Light Brigade."

#### THE CHARGE OF THE MULE BRIGADE

*Half a mile, half a mile,  
Half a mile onward,  
Right through the Georgia troops  
Broke the two hundred.  
"Forward the Mule Brigade!  
Charge for the Rebs," they neighed.  
Straight for the Georgia troops  
Broke the two hundred.*

*"Forward the Mule Brigade!"  
Was there a mule dismayed?  
Not when their long ears felt  
All their ropes sundered.  
Theirs not to make reply,  
Theirs not to reason why,  
Theirs but to make Rebs fly.  
On! to the Georgia troops  
Broke the two hundred.*

*Mules to the right of them,  
Mules to the left of them,  
Mules behind them  
Pawed, neighed, and thundered.  
Breaking their own confines  
Breaking through Longstreet's lines  
Into the Georgia troops  
Stormed the two hundred.*

*Wild all their eyes did glare,  
Whisked all their tails in air  
Scattering the chivalry there,  
While all the world wondered.  
Not a mule back bestraddled,  
Yet how they all skedaddled—  
Fled every Georgian,  
Unsabred, unsaddled,  
Scattered and sundered!  
How they were routed there  
By the two hundred!*

*Mules to the right of them,  
Mules to the left of them,  
Mules behind them  
Pawed, neighed, and thundered;  
Followed by hoof and head  
Full many a hero fled,  
Fain in the last ditch dead,  
Back from an ass's jaw  
All that was left of them,—  
Left by the two hundred.*

*When can their glory fade?  
Oh, what a wild charge they made!  
All the world wondered.  
Honor the charge they made!  
Honor the Mule Brigade,  
Long-eared two hundred!*

## PROFILE

### Black Troops from New York State

The state of New York was officially credited with having provided 448,850 men for the war, fully 11.6 percent of the state's residents, and about sixteen percent of those who served the Union. Of these, 4,125 were African-Americans, about 8.4 percent of the state's black population, though hardly 0.02 percent of the total number of black men who served the Union.

Although black residents of New York—including Frederick Douglass, who lived in Rochester—had been urging the enlistment of African-American troops since the very beginning of the war, it was not until rather late that the state acceded to the proposal. The final push to form a black regiment came from the New York City Union League Club. On November 20, 1863, the club adopted the resolution to raise a "colored regiment" and appointed a recruitment committee that included some of the most prominent men in the city and state, among them Van Rensselaers, Roosevelts (including FDR's father), Jays, Astors, and Collyers, from the family that gave us the infamous "Collyer Brothers." Although Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton thought the proposal an excellent one, and the state's adjutant general's office reluctantly submitted to it, Governor Horatio Seymour was ill-disposed to approve the raising of African-American troops, fearing that he would lose the working class vote in New York City. Nevertheless, the Union League members persisted, and, aided by some prodding from Stanton, the governor soon lent his name to the project. The New York City Union League Club was authorized to raise a regiment early in December.

Almost all of the black men accredited to New York State who served, nearly 4,000, did so in three regiments—the 20th, 26th, and 31st United States Colored Troops. Oddly, only about half of these men were actually born in the state. The rest hailed from almost every other state in the Union, plus a variety of foreign locales, including England, France, Portugal, various Latin American countries and Caribbean islands, China, the East Indies, Africa, and even Hawaii. Their average (continued on page 93)

## DO YOU KNOW?

1. This Civil War general is buried in America's largest mausoleum.
2. Gettysburg was the bloodiest battle of the war, with 51,000 combined casualties. Which battle ranks second?
3. This Union general was relieved for sleeping on duty.
4. This Confederate general was known as the "Stonewall of the West."
5. Winfield S. Hancock became known as "the Superb" for his action in this battle.



ROGER D. HUNT COLLECTION

6. This Union colonel (above) sought the advice of Confederate general Simon B. Buckner as to whether or not he should surrender his troops.

**TEASER:** "Charge them both ways" is the remark Nathan Bedford Forrest reputedly made during this battle, in which Forrest's troops were attacked from two sides.

**THE ANSWERS** to questions 1-6 are on page 92. If you know the answer to the teaser question, send it to: NORTH & SOUTH, 33756 Black Mountain Road, Tollhouse, CA 93667. The author of the correct answer drawn from the *North & South* hat will win a free book prize.

### WE HAVE A WINNER!

The Teaser question in volume 8, #1 was "This former Union major general has Confederate symbols on his grave because he moved south after the war, became a farmer, and won the respect of his former enemies." The answer is William T.H. Brooks, division commander in the VI and XVIII Corps, commander of the X Corps.

We received ten correct answers (including some interesting information with respect to his gravestone, and the fact that his commission as major general was revoked). The answer picked from the *North & South* hat was that from Karen Kloss of Westerville, Ohio, who receives as her book prize a copy of C. Wyatt Evans' *The Legend of John Wilkes Booth*.



# THE LITHOGRAPHERS' WAR

## UNION AND CONFEDERATE PATRIOTIC COVERS



**THE ENVELOPE IS, BY COMPARISON** to the letter it contains, unremarkable and expendable. The letter stood alone and un-enveloped for centuries—correspondents merely folded their paper over and sealed it with wax. In many foreign countries, envelopes continue to be unknown or ill-favored, and so-called self-mailers dominate today's postal traffic. Even many archives, the supposed

Above: Many envelopes depicted elaborate scenes of men leaving home for war. Such images helped to romanticize the conflict, honor women's sacrifice, and remind men that their conduct should always be worthy of the women they left behind.

*Note:* The term "lithography" is used generically throughout this article to refer to the process by which the images on envelopes were created. Certain of them may well have been produced by other techniques, such as engraving or block printing.

conservators of quiet curiosities, sell envelopes away from the letters they protected so long and so well. In *Ten Years Among the Mailbags* (1855), James Holbrook gave us a clue as to why we should find the envelope so consistently underwhelming. An undercover agent sent to ferret out suspected cases of mail fraud, Holbrook noted that his job was a difficult one because "physiognomy will not go far in aiding us to determine as to a given letter, whether its contents are grave or gay. A well-ordered epistle, like a highly bred man, does not show on its face the emotions which it may contain." Between 1861 and 1865, the faces of American envelopes, like the faces of American men, were contorted with emotion. While Northern and Southern armies battled in the field, Northern and Southern designers battled on the out-

side of envelopes, creating some of the most colorful and powerfully charged images the nation had ever seen.<sup>1</sup>

The Civil War has long been recognized for its "firsts" in modern warfare: mine fields, flame throwers, repeating rifles, naval torpedoes, and even aircraft carriers (a boat designed for transporting balloons). These patriotic covers, as they are called, represent several "firsts" of their own. Their popularity with a public unaccustomed to such eye-candy made them one of the country's first fads. Their colorful encroachment on public space constituted a first, if unfortunate, step toward the visual bombardment of modern advertising. Most significant, their use of vivid imagery to direct the emotions and secure the allegiance of a civilian population marked an important first in American wartime propaganda.



Lithographed envelopes were not entirely new in 1861. Political parties had from the 1840s become increasingly sophisticated in their use of buttons, banners—and envelopes. Though differing in their planks and platforms, both Whigs and Democrats had struggled for years to link themselves to the traditional symbols (the flag, the eagle, Columbia, George Washington, etc.) that were then taking shape in the voters' minds. On Union patriotic covers, at least, these symbols continued to predominate throughout the Civil War.<sup>2</sup>

The early national period witnessed a similar maturation in business stationery. In an era without billboards or logo-laden athletic wear, the antebellum envelope was one of the few relatively blank, widely circulated surfaces that could support an advertisement. Letter handlers were treated to the colorful logos and slogans of, for instance, the Charter Oak Life Insurance Company of Hartford, Connecticut, or the cure-all patent medicine, "Dr. Hawks' Universal Stimulant," which touted the three fors: "For Internal and External Use"; "For All Climates and Seasons"; and "For Sale Everywhere." While Civil War envelopes rarely sported such unvarnished advertisements, companies did, as in any war, try to link themselves to, and profit from, patriotism. In one Union design, for instance, a nearly deaf man holds a giant earhorn into which another man is screaming. The caption reads, "*Deaf Man*—'I have the Secession Fever and it is making me deaf.' *Union Man*—'Get some of Magee's Union Envelopes and that will cure you of the fever.'"

Patriotic-cover designers also drew inspiration from the ground-breaking work of reform movements (temperance and abolition, especially). Precisely because their causes were relatively unpopular, these reform groups had pioneered the use of images to catch the eye and amplify their message. To a Victorian public unaccustomed to visual assaults, even a crude drawing of a man whipping a half-naked slave-woman had a powerful effect. Like reform imagery, the colorful content on Civil War envelopes was not merely decorative; it was part of a concerted effort to trigger and direct an emotional response.<sup>3</sup>

While Civil War iconographers drew on these developments, however, the scale, scope, and sophistication of their

efforts were unparalleled in the history of American printing. It is estimated that over four thousand designs were churned out of the nation's print shops during the first six months of the war. In all some six thousand designs have survived in manuscript and philatelic collections, and many more are probably lost forever. Admittedly, some of the designs were derived from other sources (songsheets, magazines, newspapers, etc.) and thus cannot be said to be unique to the envelope trade. But most of the images were original and reflected a new initiative on the part of their creators to contribute to the war effort.



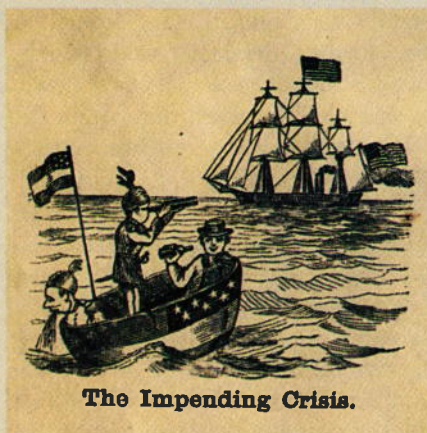
As might be expected, the Union won the lithographers' war as surely as it won the soldiers' war—and for some of the same reasons. Confederate shortfalls extended not only to food and firearms but to paper, ink, presses, and qualified lithographers. By the end of the war, Southern printers had run through all of their white paper, all of their colored paper, and were printing on wallpaper or out of business. Baltimore, a relatively sophisticated center for graphics production, never joined the Confederacy, despite its divided sympathies. New Orleans, a nascent center for Southern printing, fell to the Union in 1862, as did Nashville, one of the South's leading suppliers of paper. Importation was limited by the blockade; artists were limited by the scarcity of engraving materials and the necessity for all fit men to fight. Thus, for every image the South managed to mass-produce, the North produced a hundred. (This was a problem not merely for Southern envelope vendors but for the Confederate government itself, which faced constant challenges to create

stamps, seals, and currency. Throughout the war, the Confederacy's official image was vastly inferior to that of the Union. It was even remarked that counterfeit Confederate bills were discernible by their superior quality.)<sup>4</sup>

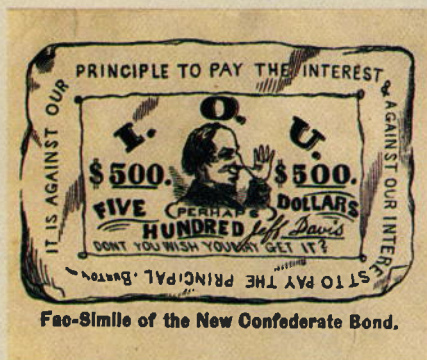
In addition to material shortages, Confederate designers faced larger "symbolic" challenges. To have an independent identity, a nation must have symbols and meanings for symbols that are uniquely its own. In the case of the North, such emblems were historically established, easily recognized, and dearly loved. When the Southern states seceded, the North did not peel stars or stripes from its flag,

did not concede Columbia, the eagle, or the capitol building as its national icons. The South, of course, shared the history that had given these symbols their potency, but it could no longer share the symbols themselves. All were indelibly associated with the Union. Thus, Confederates had to create a new set of icons—a task that proved daunting and occasionally disastrous. The Don't-Tread-On-Me snake, for example, seemed at first a promising symbol for the South. It hearkened back to the Revolution, conjuring up memories of legitimate rebellions, and it neatly coupled the South's desire to be left alone with its ability to strike suddenly and with deadly effect. But the snake was also burdened by Biblical overtones that Northerners were quick to pounce upon. The word secession, with its repetition of S's, seemed the work of a serpent's tongue. Clearly, it had tempted

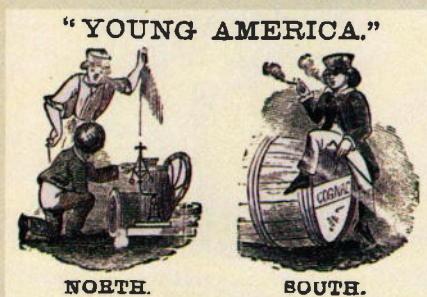




The Impending Crisis.



Fao-Simile of the New Confederate Bond.



the South into the sin of war and destroyed the American Eden. Confederates faced similar difficulties with the palm tree. While visually arresting, the palm was an iconographic disaster. In any botanical brawl, it was no match for the size and strength, the majesty and deep roots, of the Massachusetts pine. Even the Confederate flag proved problematic. In the first year of the war, the changing number of stars drifted uneasily among shifting swatches of red, white, and blue.<sup>5</sup>

All this may seem a trifling concern for a nation at war, but the lack of propaganda-power proved a significant drawback in the Confederacy's bid for independence. The failure to conceive itself symbolically reflected deeper issues of Confederate identity—an inability to picture what an independent South would look like, and through this, what it would stand for. Like the Confederate image itself, the concepts for which Southern soldiers fought would always remain slightly unfixed. As one rebel noted, he had to battle not only a better-equipped Northern army but "the 'Stars and Stripes,' the 'Star Spangled Banner,' 'Hail Columbia,' 'Tramp, Tramp, Tramp,' 'John Brown's Body,' 'Rally round the Flag,' and all the fury and fanaticism which skilled minds could create.... [We not only] fought good wagons, fat horses...[and] tons of quartermaster's stores [but] illustrated papers [that] cheer[ed] the 'Boys in Blue' with sketches of the glorious deeds they did not do."<sup>6</sup>

Pressing these advantages, Northerners blasted the South with what amounted to an iconographic fusillade. Many of the designs were simple statements of Union patriotism—blue-clad soldiers storming the ramparts or flag-bearers leading the charge. But many more were stinging anti-Southern satire. Just as England, for instance, had made endless fun of America for its immaturity, so Unionists pilloried the infant

Confederacy. The South, they suggested, was merely playing at being a country; it had neither the economic nor the institutional sophistication to garner the respect of adult society. On one Union cover, for instance, a magnificent clipper ship is depicted in one panel above the words, "The Great West, Capacity 1000 tons, Receipts of Grain at Buffalo in 24 hours, 1,100,000 bushels"; the second panel shows a glorified rowboat with slaves at the oars above the words, "The Great South, Capacity 1,000 pounds, Receipts at New Orleans in 24 hours, 2 1/2 bushels." The Confederate navy became a similar object of ridicule. Union covers portrayed bedraggled and seasick pirates adrift in leaky vessels with tattered flags. More laughable even than the South's shipping was its financial condition. In one Union design Jefferson Davis is depicted on a Confederate bond thumbing his nose; the bond reads, "It is against our principle to pay the interest & against our interest to pay the principal." In another design Davis is shown distributing bonds to hogs that represent the Southern states; the pigs are clearly undernourished and the caption reads, "That Feed Won't Do."

On a substantial subset of envelopes, Northern designers took the infantilization of the South more literally. Southerners are shown, for instance, riding hobby horses and beating toy drums, mewling like babies or behaving like brats. One design even claims that what the South really needs is a good spanking. On this envelope, Davis is shown as a young boy, whining before the Guardian of Liberty: "Please, Ma'am, my big brother won't let me alone." Liberty responds, "Well it serves you right. Why don't you mind your Uncle Abe. Just wait until McClellan comes in contact with you, he will give you such a sound thrashing you'll never complain again." The theme of these envelopes is not merely that the Confederacy was a young country but a puerile one—a charge with strong roots in the antebellum period. Partly in reality, more so in the popular mind, the childrearing habits of the two sections differed. Northern parents supposedly broke a child's will and erected on its ruins a foundation of self-control. Southern parents, particularly with their boys, supposedly built up a child's will so that he could go on to control others. In the minds of many Northerners, the Southern system created tyrannical, per-



petual infants who were incapable of controlling their urges and unable to accept responsibility for actions that were typically childish and destructive. One pro-Union envelope captures this mind-set; it depicts two examples of "Young America," the first a Northern lad skillfully engaged in a trade, the second a Southern boy, all lacy cuffs and careful coiffure, sitting astride a liquor barrel and smoking a cigar.<sup>7</sup>

As this image suggests, intemperance also played a significant role in anti-Southern satire. Unionists rarely missed an opportunity to work a whiskey bottle into their graphics. In one design a Confederate general is mounted on a speckled toy horse; he scans the horizon with a telescope that is in fact a recently consumed bottle of booze. In another, a little skeleton toasts the viewer while seated atop a whiskey barrel encircled by snakes. The caption reads, "The Key to the Southern Rebellion." The larger message of such images is that Southern national aspirations are the drunken dreams of an overgrown boy. The South, it was implied, was nothing but a spoiled fop, accustomed to wallowing in sin and having his own way, unwilling to relinquish his petty tyrannies and become a productive member of society. One design captures this message perfectly; it depicts a grizzled "Southern Gorilla (Guerilla)," flail and hip flask tucked into his belt, supposedly braying:

"Oh! for a nigger, and oh! for a whip;  
Oh! for a cocktail, and oh! for a nip;  
Oh! for a shot at old Greeley and  
Beecher;  
Oh! for a crack at a Yankee school-  
teacher;  
Oh! for a captain, and oh! for a ship;  
Oh! for a cargo of niggers each trip,"  
And so he kept oh-ing for all he had not.  
Not contented with owing for all that he'd got.

As this Union design implies, for all they disagreed upon, Northern and Southern iconographers shared an unselfconscious assumption of white supremacy. The war may have gone on to destroy slavery, but the preservation of the Union was the primary Federal objective, and emancipation, when it came, was as much a military response as a moral one. These essential facts are reflected in the lithographers' war as well. Slavery, pro or con, was never central to the stationery battles. Of the six thousand

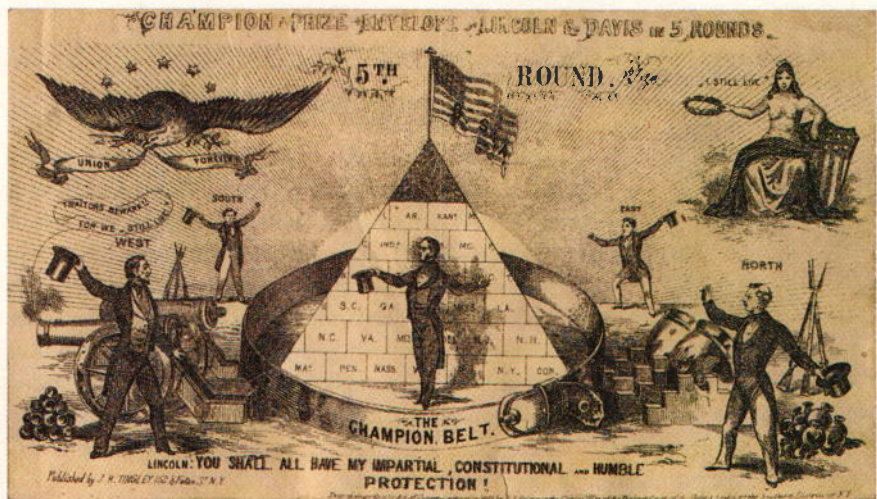
## THE LINCOLN-DAVIS SMACKDOWN

Occasionally, stationers created designs in a series. The practice allowed them to tell longer stories (and encouraged the public to buy more envelopes). One of the more intricate of these series, "Lincoln & Davis in 5 Rounds," presents a ludicrous "my president could beat up your president" scenario. In "Round One," it is clear that Lincoln could win on posture alone. His head is held high, his chest is thrust forward, and his legs are widely and firmly planted. Davis, by contrast, looks like a hissing cat or a cringing minor demon. Backing up Lincoln is an ordered army. Backing up Davis are lounging dogs and lounging slaves. In the top right, figures representing the major European powers bob in calm seas while watching the fight.

In "Round Two," Lincoln immediately gets the upper hand by bending Davis over and exposing his posterior. The emasculating significance of the move is obvious. Lincoln is in a position to mount Davis, and he has shortened Davis' tail, which is to say his manhood. "Secession is looking smaller," notes one of the witnesses. The Confederate flag hangs more limply than before and begins to fall like a curtain over

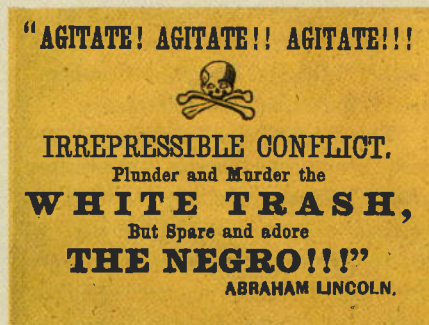
the supposed king, cotton. Off to the right, the slaves are celebrating while Confederate sympathizers watch in horror and make excuses. In the background, the European powers are worried that they (or more likely their business interests) will take a bath in turbulent seas.

The last three "rounds" seal Lincoln's victory. By "Round Three," Lincoln has Davis in a headlock. The slaves who haven't run off are being trampled by the fleeing Confederates. The dogs, representing the Confederate army, are clearly whipped and starving, and the Confederate standard lies abandoned in the mud. In the background, Britain and France drift toward the Union side. By "Round Four," Davis and secession are a mere grease spot in the middle of the ring. Lincoln has the world tucked under his arm, and moderates have returned to the South. In "Round Five," Lincoln takes a bow within his championship belt. The states are represented by solid blocks in a towering pyramid of stone. From North, South, East, and West come huzzahs for Lincoln and the Union. Off to the right, a cannon quietly warns that it will sound again if traitors reemerge.





extant envelope designs produced during the conflict, only sixty or so (one percent) depict African Americans. The depictions that do exist, North and South, display an unflattering flair for racial stereotyping.



reotyping. Despite the efforts of the USCT, lithographers on both sides persisted in seeing the war as a white man's conflict.

Because Southern designs tend to be more crude, and because far fewer of them were created, it is difficult to make definitive statements about pro-slavery iconography. The little Confederate stationery that deals with the issue flatly condemns the North's attempt to upset the natural racial hierarchy. One design, for instance, merely notes that "Alabama will not submit to Negro rule!" and another (mis)quotes Lincoln as saying, "Agitate! Agitate!! Agitate!!! Irrepressible Conflict, Plunder and Murder the White Trash But Spare and adore The Negro!!!" More sophisticated, and perhaps more surprising, are the Union designs, which depict African Americans with ambivalence at best. Though major Union generals had envelopes dedicated to them, as did Lincoln and other popular figures, neither Frederick Douglass nor any other distinguished black man or woman was so honored. Instead, the vast majority of these Union envelopes depict minstrel figures airing their ignorance in broken English. A few designs admit that slavery was a cause of the war, but almost none

suggest that slavery's end was a cause for which men should fight and die.<sup>8</sup>

A substantial subset of these Union envelopes depict scenes of retribution, in which slaves bear witness to their masters' humiliation, or actual inversion, in which the roles of slave and master are reversed. On one envelope, for instance, a slave is shown carrying a knapsack and turning away from a tree on which a white man has been hanged. The caption reads, "Massa Davis, what a figure, You will cut upon dat swing. I'd sooner be the poorest Nigger, Don the whitest 'Cotton King.'" Others that strike the same theme depict Davis in a pillory with a slave laughing at him, in a cage on all fours with a slave poking him with a stick, or on a flaming rack with a devil prodding him and a slave watching approvingly. On the clearest inversion envelope, Jefferson Davis is shown in one panel imperiously astride his horse, in the next hoeing a potato patch under a slave's direction. The caption under the first panel reads, "Jeff the Dictator / As he is"; the second reads, "Jeff, The Dig-Tater-Er / As He Should Be." In each of these designs, blacks are not active figures but passive onlookers; they do not dispense the punishment but merely watch as it is laid on.

The black figures usually stand just outside the scene, an embodiment of the dirty conscience of the master class, called to witness the delivery of a justice long in coming. The central message, then, of most of the Union's racially charged envelopes is not that blacks have had an unfairly bad situation in America but that planters have had an unfairly good one. The designers differed with Lincoln: the Civil War was not a struggle to bring the low high, to lift the artificial weights from all shoulders and afford all "an unfettered start, and a fair chance, in the race of life." Rather it was a struggle to bring the high low, to remove the artificial props from any who would fancy themselves aristocrats or kings in a white man's democracy. One Union design that perfectly captures this sentiment shows the sun setting over a harbor in the background; in the foreground slaves work a cotton field while their master looks on. The caption reads, "To-day a King; To-morrow Nothing."

Viewing such envelopes as anti-planter propaganda helps explain another important iconographic theme, which displays not inversion between



## SECESSSSSSSION!

Intrinsically, "secession" is a rather bland word, unburdened by connotations of good or evil. Through consistent association with negative images, however, Northern designers were able to make it look and sound treacherous, treasonous, poisonous. Disunion is as appropriate a term for the South's political ideology as secession, but Northerners consistently preferred the latter. There is of course a subtle difference between the two. When objects or people unite, there is an implied consensus. Logically, then, disunion might be accomplished by a single aggrieved party on the grounds that the consensus had been broken. Secession, by contrast, had an illegitimate, rebellious ring to it. The plurality of S's made it seem somehow slippery, slithery, sinful.



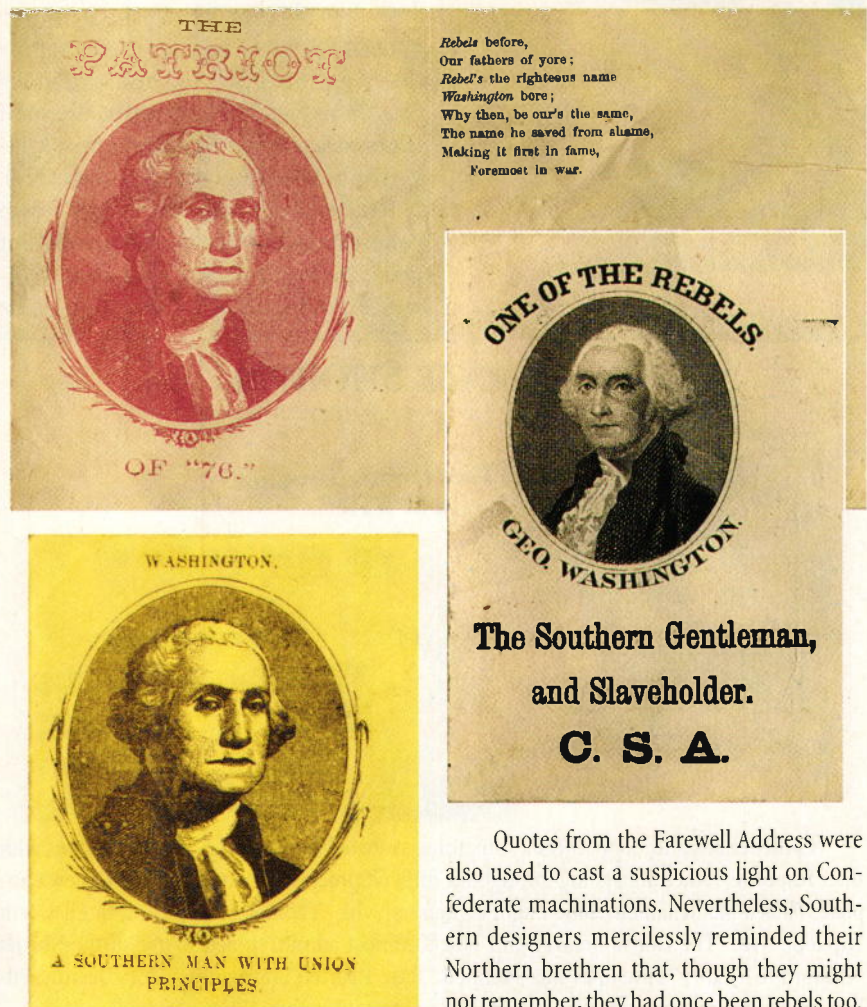
master and slave but fraternization. Far from condemning the South for being too Anglo-centric—for establishing a racial caste system and segregated culture—these Union envelopes condemn the South for being too Afro-centric—for establishing a system in which miscegenation was common and blacks formed the bedrock for a way of life. In one such design, a ridiculously clad black man with a saucepan on his head appears below the title, “A King for the South.” In another, George Washington is depicted as the “Corner Stone of the Federal Union,” while a slave is depicted as the “Corner Stone of the ‘Southern Confederacy.’” In a more sexually explicit graphic, a white babe is shown suckling at the breast of a black woman; the title reads, “An Institution of the ‘C.S.A.’—Cotton States Aristocracy.” In another, a black and white couple are shown in bed together; clothes are draped across a nearby chair. The caption reads, “The ‘Peculiar’ Institution.” The clear message here is that the South is to be damned not for slaveholding but for race-mixing.

In the popular medium of envelopes, then, the propaganda battle between North and South was not over slavery but over who had the purer strain of white supremacy. The South condemned the North for being too black-loving (in a figurative sense); the North condemned the South for being too black-loving (in a literal sense). Regardless of the official positions of either government, it was this racially loaded version of the war that sold more envelopes. In one design of Confederate origin, a small black figure



## THE BATTLE FOR WASHINGTON

On most terrains, Southern designers were at a distinct symbolic disadvantage. But they did win some battles. Confederates could with some right claim an exclusive stewardship over George Washington's legacy. Clearly Southern, undeniably a slaveholder, and a militant rebel in his day, the father of all Founding Fathers was a propaganda coup for the Confederacy. Northern designers did not give up Washington without a fight, of course. “Washington: A Southern Man of Union Principle” seemed the most satisfactory finesse.





is shown trudging along wearily; the caption reads, "The Negro Lincoln Making Tracks for Washington." In another of Federal origin, a monkey is shown reading a book upside down; the caption reads in part, "Jeff's a Negro-Man,—Sir." Denigration of the enemy is an important part of any wartime propaganda. In the Civil War, however, the denigration was more grimly literal than it has ever been.

As might be expected, few envelopes urged peace. Like their soldier counterparts, Union and Confederate stationers were in the business of exchanging shots not mending fences. One exception to this rule depicts two men fighting under the caption, "as it is," and two children, bundled in the flag, sleeping under the caption, "as it will be." The image is quaint, but also disturbing—here reunion is a return to innocence, to the past,



to sleep. A beheaded black doll is splayed out at the foot of the bed—a toy to be wrangled over at bedtime and forgotten by morning. Of course, the image forecast the North and South's eventual reconciliation perfectly. By the turn of the century, each side had agreed to overlook the racial dimensions of the conflict; each side had embraced the war as America's Iliad—a demonstration of our collective glory. But the lithographers' war lays bare another aspect of the conflict—one a little less savory. They may be crude, but there is hate in these images, and worse than this, the manufacture of it. In their own rough way, these envelopes glorified belligerence, denigrated countrymen, and helped to make enemies of brothers. Like most propaganda, they reveal important truths, but they were not created in the service of the truth. ■

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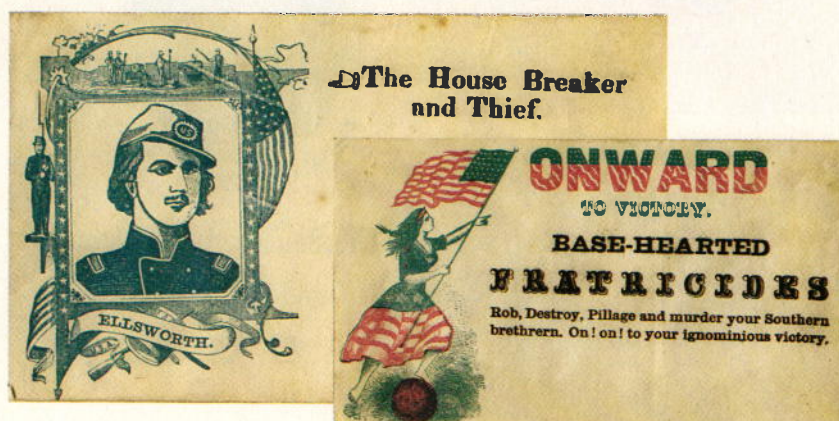
**CREDITS:** Most of the images reproduced for this article can be found in the Civil War Pictorial Envelopes album at the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A few items are from the author's own collection. Other images discussed but not depicted here can be found in William R. Weiss Jr., *The Catalog of Union*

*Civil War Patriotic Covers* (Bethlehem, 1995) or Hubert C. Skinner, Erin R. Gunter, and Warren H. Sanders, *The New Dietz Confederate States Catalog and Handbook* (Miami, 1986).

Notes:

1. For more information on Civil War iconography, see Shirley Samuels, *Facing America: Iconography and the Civil War* (New York, 2004) and Alice Fahs, *The Imagined Civil War: Popular Literature of the North and South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill, 2001). Quotation from James Holbrook, *Ten Years Among the Mailbags, or Notes from the Diary of a Special Agent of the Post-Office Department* (Philadelphia, 1855).
2. On the elaboration of campaign iconography, see: Jean H. Baker, *Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, 1983) and "The Ceremonies of Politics: Nineteenth-Century Rituals of National Affirmation," in William J. Cooper Jr., Michael F. Holt, and John McCardell, eds., *A Master's Due: Essays in Honor of David Herbert Donald* (Baton Rouge, 1985), 161-78; Roger A. Fischer, *Tippecanoe & Trinkets Too: The Material Culture of American Presidential Campaigns, 1828-1884* (Urbana, 1988).
3. See Jean Fagan Yellin, *Women & Sisters: The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture* (New Haven, 1989).
4. Mark E. Neely Jr., *The Confederate Image: Prints of the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill, 1987), 3-9.
5. Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge, 1988), 1-21.
6. Neely, *The Confederate Image*, 6. Elizabeth Van Lew, a Richmond woman who loathed the Confederacy, penned this critique of the Confederate image in her diary: "We were groping in thick darkness. The azure on our flag was gone. The few stars left were set in blood. The shadeless Palmetto, the hissing serpent, types of unrest and treachery, were fitly chosen as our emblems." From David D. Ryan, ed., *A Yankee Spy in Richmond: The Civil War Diary of "Crazy Bet" Van Lew* (Mechanicsburg, 1996), 36.
7. On childrearing in the two sections, see especially Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics & Behavior in the Old South* (New York, 1983), 117-148.
8. Michel Fabre, "La Représentation du Noir sur les Enveloppes de Propagande Patriotique pendant La Guerre de Sécession," *Revue Française d'Etudes Américaines*, 4(7), 1979, 9-16.

## CONFEDERATE SHORTFALLS

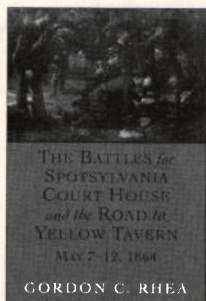


Confederates and Copperheads sometimes resorted to stamping Union envelopes with their response, rather than going through the difficult process of designing a whole new template. Thus a McClellan envelope might be defaced with "The Bag of Wind," or an Ellsworth envelope with "The House Breaker and Thief." Almost admitting defeat, one of the North's "Onward to Victory" envelopes was stamped, "Base Hearted Fratricides—Rob, Destroy, Pillage and murder your Southern brethren. On! on! to your ignominious victory."



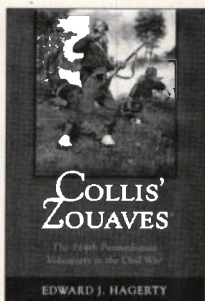
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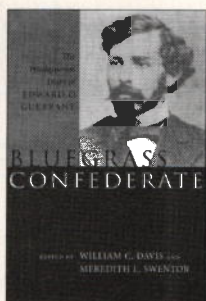
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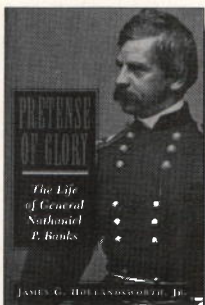


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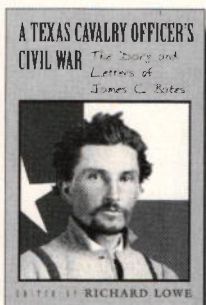


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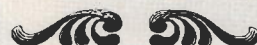
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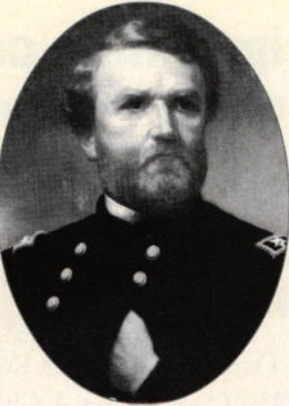
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PATRICK BRENNAN

# LAST STAND IN THE HEARTLAND

The Fight for Nashville, December 1864



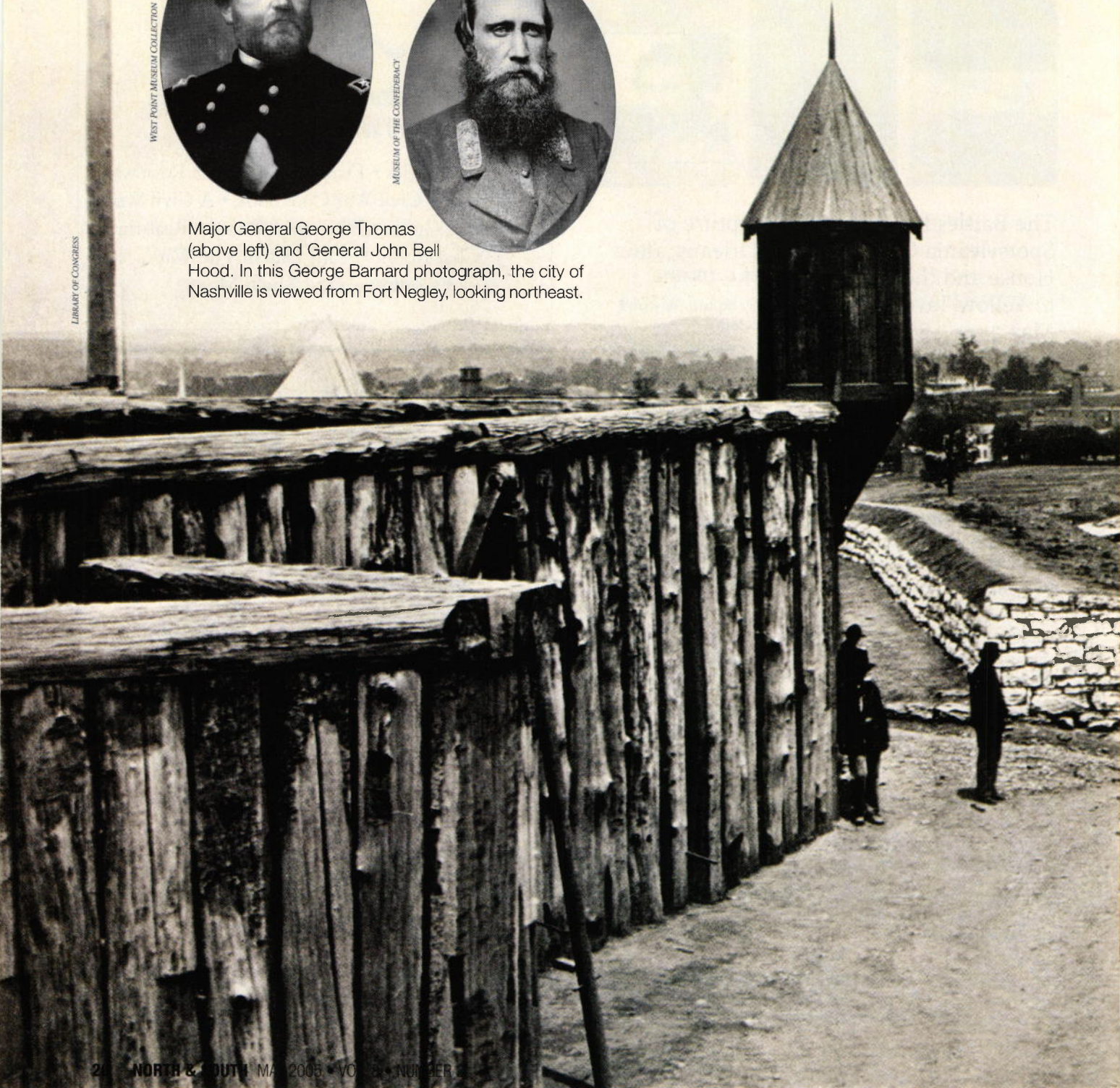
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Major General George Thomas (above left) and General John Bell Hood. In this George Barnard photograph, the city of Nashville is viewed from Fort Negley, looking northeast.

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**IT WAS APPROACHING MIDNIGHT ON NOVEMBER 30, 1864,**

and Lieutenant Colonel James Rusling was bidding his hosts a good night. He had spent the better part of the evening at a reception held in a Nashville abode, but the dutiful quartermaster was bookending his social diversions with the business of war. Earlier he had stopped at Major General George Thomas' headquarters and discovered that the Federal forces under Major General John Schofield had soundly defeated General John Bell Hood's Confederates just fifteen miles south at Franklin. Now, with his compliments extended, Rusling made his way back to his chief's office, where the temperature had risen considerably. Thomas and a number of his staff were rejoicing over that day's great Union victory when, suddenly, the door opened and in walked Major General A.J. Smith. It was a moment of triumph. Smith's arrival—the lack of which had greatly worried Thomas—signaled the successful transfer of his 10,461 men from St. Louis, a feat that involved fifty-nine transports and gunboats. Thomas was now assured that his

entire force would be in place to take on Hood's invaders. The taciturn Thomas shocked Rusling when, in a moment of exultation, he “literally took Smith in his arms and hugged him.” The officers then spread out a floor-full of maps describing Nashville's surroundings and took to their knees to analyze defensive strategies and troop placements.<sup>1</sup>

To the south, Schofield and his command shared but a fraction of Thomas' exuberance. Near midnight after the battle at Franklin, they had abandoned their earthworks and crossed the Harpeth River to begin their trudge north. Now, in the early hours of December 1, they were approaching their third day of marching and fighting, and most if not all of the Northerners were well past their breaking points. Any stop in the march found bluecoated soldiers breaking ranks and collapsing in sleep, only to be roused awake with the threat of the pursuing rebels. One participant recalled that they actually “staggered rather than marched.” But two salient points assuaged whatever exhaustion they faced: they had just dealt their opponents an obvious and bloody

drubbing, and this soul-sapping march across the Brentwood Hills would take them into the security of Nashville's fortifications.<sup>2</sup>

As the gloaming of early morning cast its pall, Schofield's horde came to a weary halt at Brentwood. Earlier Thomas had promised him that supports would greet his army there, but Schofield found nothing beyond Thomas' order that the troops should continue on to Nashville. Schofield himself was nearly used up, and he felt betrayed that Thomas had failed to move reinforcements forward. He angrily went to sleep on the side of the road as his army took up the march, until the tail of the column passed without incident. He then mounted up and picked his way through the crowded roadway, reaching Nashville about 8:00 a.m.

It would prove to be a short, almost embarrassing meeting between Thomas and his subaltern. The army commander had ventured out to greet his junior officer at the designated headquarters of the XXIII Corps near the Franklin Pike, but literally moments before Schofield arrived, Thomas was hit with a bomb-





shell. He learned from a staffer that Schofield's inability to place the Harpeth between his army and Hood had nearly caused a disaster, and Thomas was still digesting this distressing nugget when the exhausted Schofield arrived. Schofield would later complain that Thomas was "cordial but undemonstrative," and he admitted that he may have not shown his superior "due consideration." Thomas thought Schofield looked tired, and Schofield admitted that he was. With that the conversation petered out. Schofield turned to await the arrival of his men while Thomas departed on other business. Their mutual discomfort would be a harbinger of things to come.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, north on the Franklin Pike "poured" the Federals, "the rumble of the wagons and artillery...unceasing." One rebel prisoner recalled that pursuing Confederate artillery "hurried us on the road from quick time to a swift run," but most of the Unionists found fatigue to be the worst enemy. Then began a fervent drama. As the column crested yet another in a seemingly endless series of hills and ridges, the bleary-eyed Federals beheld Nashville's skyline crowning the northern horizon. Backs were slapped and hands were shaken, and the leaden steps regained a spirited bounce. Captured rebel battle flags colored the mass of blue as Schofield's boys "made the wintry air ring with our cheers and shouts of triumph." Indeed, the Federals had much to celebrate, as the race that had commenced nearly a week before was over. With Tennessee's capital spread out before them, the Unionists had won the dash to Nashville.<sup>4</sup>

George Thomas and his subalterns had done their work well. As the Federals filed toward the city, officers guided them off the roadways onto "a range of hills which can be made a very extensive position." From midday into the afternoon the Federals muscled into line, forming a cordon around Nashville's southern environs. Everywhere fires sprang up and rations were cooked, even as the soldiers, "all nearly exhausted from lack of sleep together with the great anxiety and suspense," laid out rough camps and collapsed in sleep. But officers soon circulated and stirred the men to action. A new defensive line south of the existing one would be needed, and the arriving soldiers would have to forego rest to get it built. Soon the Federals were slash-

ing at the dirt and molding a snaking line of earthworks. Artillery arrived and was shouldered into place. Besides fighting, these Northern boys had become very good at two important aspects of soldiering: they could march under the worst of circumstances, and they could turn Southern real estate into a nearly impregnable fortress with admirable speed. On this day they somehow managed to do both.<sup>5</sup>

The city became a beehive of activity, and all day long compelling scenes played out to audiences large and small. That morning, A.J. Smith's people disembarked near the drawbridge on Nashville's waterfront and marched to the capitol building. There, Tennessee's war governor—newly elected Vice President Andrew Johnson—delivered a spirited address, whereupon the Federals marched out some four miles to take their place on the rapidly evolving defense line. Marching in the opposite direction and straight for the penitentiary was a ragged clot of Confederate prisoners from Franklin, exhausted from their exertions and further prostrated by two days without food. "Hunger had seized hold of our vitals," recalled one Southerner, but feeding prisoners would prove to be a low Federal priority. Nearby, John Schofield

arrived at a hotel, where he was about to fall asleep for nearly thirty hours. Outside his window, rumors coursed through Nashville's streets that there would be a battle the next morning, prompting one civilian to write, "Good Lord protect us." And finally, near sunset, Major General James Steedman's 8,500-man force tumbled off the cars at the railroad station downtown after their day-long journey from Cowan, Tennessee. With Major General James H. Wilson's cavalry command due on the morrow, Steedman's troops—many of whom were former slaves—would be the last of Thomas' infantry to arrive.<sup>6</sup>

It was a sight well worth remembering, as the hills south of Nashville glowed with thousands of campfires. One observer marveled that the Federal line looked like "an illuminated city," but at his Nashville headquarters George Thomas appreciated the less illusory nature of those fires. After a week of worry and a day of drama, the Rock of Chickamauga had his once-scattered army in hand.<sup>7</sup>

Late that night, Thomas telegraphed the War Department. He was most concerned about two sides of the same coin: the depleted condition of his cavalry and the presence just to the south of fearsome

The Tennessee state capitol. In the photograph below, Federal guns are positioned on the building's veranda, overlooking the city of Nashville.



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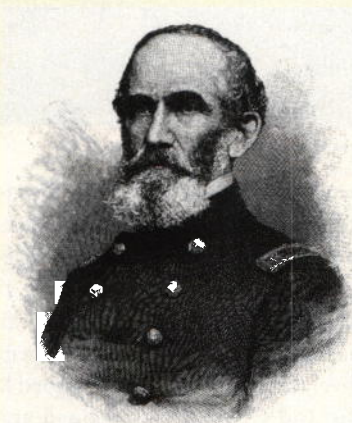
Nathan Bedford Forrest. His communiqué reflected these worries:

After General Schofield's fight of yesterday, feeling convinced that the enemy very far outnumbered him, both in infantry and cavalry, I determined to retire to the fortifications around Nashville, until General Wilson can get his cavalry equipped. He has now but about one-fourth the number of the enemy, and consequently is no match for him. I have two iron-clads here, with several gunboats, and Commander Fitch assures me that Hood can neither cross the Cumberland nor blockade it. I therefore think it best to wait here until Wilson can equip all his cavalry.

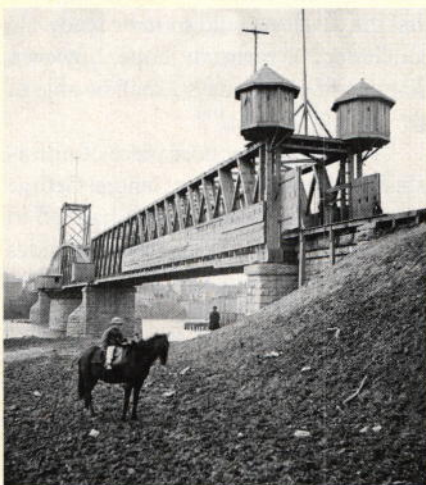
He could barely guess the intensity of the firestorm he had just sparked.<sup>8</sup>

\* \* \*

"The men should face a decisive issue rather than retreat." John Bell Hood would give a number of reasons why he decided after the bloodbath at Franklin



Major General A.J. Smith



The fortified railroad bridge across the Cumberland River.

to gather his 23,000 survivors and advance to Nashville. He claimed with little reason that reinforcements from Texas might arrive any day. He certainly knew with good reason that the locals were not volunteering to join his army. He seemed unaware of how many Federals had gravitated to Nashville and that he would be outnumbered nearly four to one. But what remains is the simple fact that Hood sensed the Confederacy was dying, and that his country and cause demanded, as he put it, "a last and manful effort to lift up the sinking fortunes." Exactly how he would accomplish this goal seemed to change daily, but Hood instinctively realized that this last effort would begin at the gates of Nashville.<sup>9</sup>

What Hood didn't realize was that the stricken Confederates who crossed the Franklin battlefield on the morning of December 1 were a changed army. Regiments were now the size of companies, brigades the size of battalions, divisions were barely brigades. But winnowed numbers weren't the only story. A deep sense of betrayal pervaded the ranks as they examined the Federal works in the brutal morning light. Back in September, their commander and their president had assured them that their lives were never to be "uselessly sacrificed," that they would only be ordered to attack "temporary breastworks." Now, as they waded through the bloody ruin of their once-proud army, they saw the acres of their dead and dying, the massive strength of the Federal position, the tears of their shaken commander. Recalling the promise not kept, the ragged Southerners vented their anger by spitting out, "Here are your temporary breastworks!" As one Confederate put it, this "violation of a solemn pledge" had created a brooding, furious, demoralized army. True, Hood remained a gallant soldier in their eyes, but their confidence in the man was gone. Word circulated through the ranks that Hood had angrily placed the responsibility for the Franklin debacle on Major General Benjamin Cheatham's men, exclaiming, "You would not catch the Yankees when I wanted you to. Now you shall fight them wherever you find them." Hood's attempt to reinvigorate his command by launching them against impregnable earthworks had had the exact opposite effect to that intended. The army that John Bell Hood led to Nashville was but a shadow of its former self.<sup>10</sup>

General Nathan Bedford Forrest led his redoubtable troopers in pursuit of the retreating Yankees, but the bluecoated horsemen kept them at bay. Meanwhile, Hood's three corps slogged through Franklin, crossed the Harpeth River, and started up the roads to Nashville. It was a march almost devoid of interest as the bone-tired Southerners climbed the Brentwood Hills and camped for the night a few miles south of Nashville. But one ember continued to stir, one spark continued to shine: after a campaign of endless sacrifice and untold horror, the battered Army of Tennessee was within striking distance of its long-lost jewel, Nashville.

\* \* \*

Although it is difficult to perceive the beautiful city of Nashville as anything but Southern, in December 1864 it was every bit the epitome of the Northern war machine. Strategically located on the Cumberland River, with eight major roadways and three railroads connecting her to all points south, antebellum Nashville had developed an enviable reputation as a major center of industry, agriculture, and education. She was arguably the most important city in the South—certainly the most important to the men who made up the Army of Tennessee—and her loss was correspondingly disastrous when early in the war the Confederate cordon near the Kentucky border collapsed. Federal troops entered her without a fight on February 24, 1862, and for the next two-and-one-half years, Nashville served as the industrial nerve center for Federal operations in the western theatre. By the time Hood arrived, the Union war effort had swelled the city's population to near 100,000.

At first, the Federals mounted batteries to command the eight roads leading into the city south of the Cumberland. Soon labor began on three works: Forts Negley, Morton, and Houston. Fort Negley on St. Cloud Hill was the lynchpin of the system, being as it was the largest stone fort built by the Federals during the war. A hilltop fortification named Blockhouse Casino was constructed southwest of Negley and south of Morton near the Franklin Pike. Then Federal engineers stockaded the state capitol building; when they were done, fifteen artillery pieces and a full infantry regiment manned what was easily the most archi-



tecturally stunning defensive position in the South. Eventually massive blockhouses were built to protect the rail bridge over the Cumberland, while every major street was blockaded and fortified. When the Northerners finished the immense powder magazine in May 1864, it seemed the defenses of the great city were complete. But that fall, with Hood operating in northern Alabama, General Zealous B. Tower was ordered to strengthen the entire system. He quickly laid out a defensive line seven miles long that incorporated most of the earlier works in addition to twenty new batteries, effectually corking the city within the Cumberland River's convenient loop. Needless to say, a somewhat lackadaisical construction approach speedily transformed into a fevered pitch when Hood crossed the Tennessee River and rolled north. Impressed laborers, quartermasters and their civilian employees, and every available soldier dug with a purpose to complete the line before the rebels arrived. When they were done, 9,000 men could hold out against anything Hood might bring to bear.<sup>11</sup>

Although George Thomas was satisfied with Tower's work, he realized quickly that his rapidly expanding force would be much too large to shoehorn into the existing line. Thomas' solution was to construct new positions farther south. It was this line that Schofield, Wood, and Smith's men began to create on the 1st and would continue to fashion over the next week. Smith's men from the XVI Corps held the western segment of the new outer line, followed to the east by Wood's IV Corps, Schofield's XXIII Corps, and Steedman's Provisional Detachment from the District of the Etowah. With the arrival on the 2nd of Wilson's Cavalry Corps, some 66,000 Federals stood poised behind the two great gouges in the Tennessee dirt.

★ ★ ★

Forrest's men were at it again early on the 2nd. Poking up the Nolensville Pike, the Southrons quickly drew Yankee interest and little else. But it wasn't until early afternoon that the enemies truly met again. Lieutenant General Stephen D. Lee's corps led Hood's advance up the Franklin Pike, and when his men crested a ridge line about a mile south of the Federal's Blockhouse Casino, they beheld a sight that took their collective breath.

There was Nashville, its jumble of buildings dominated by the capitol, but between them and the city was the vast Federal armed camp, with "every hill a fort, and long lines of rifle pits connecting them with the dark blue line of armed men." This was the closest these Southerners had been to their spiritual center for years. Despite the dispiriting display of Northern power, Confederate cheers echoed across the hills.<sup>12</sup>



Behind the Union lines at Nashville.

Inevitably, the movement on the hills to the south caught the Northerners' collective eye. One Illini recalled, "The Rebels began to come in sight on the top of a hill about a half mile from us.... They would halt for a moment and cheer, then file to the right or left and go into position." As Lee's men scraped at the earth and started their own line of defense, soldiers blue and gray paused to survey the scene. It was a dance they had grown used to, over the Duck River at Columbia, the fields at Spring Hill, the earthworks near Franklin, and now, the hills of Nashville. Across another piece of Tennessee they stood facing each other, the blue-bellies snug in their winter uniforms with well-stocked haversacks, the rebs mostly barefoot and in rags, their eyes hollowed by hunger. No doubt many wondered how bloody the next encounter would prove to be. But for now they would dig, aware only that after the debacle at Spring Hill and the bloodbath at Franklin, they were still alive and would live, if their generals determined it, to fight yet again.<sup>13</sup>

★ ★ ★

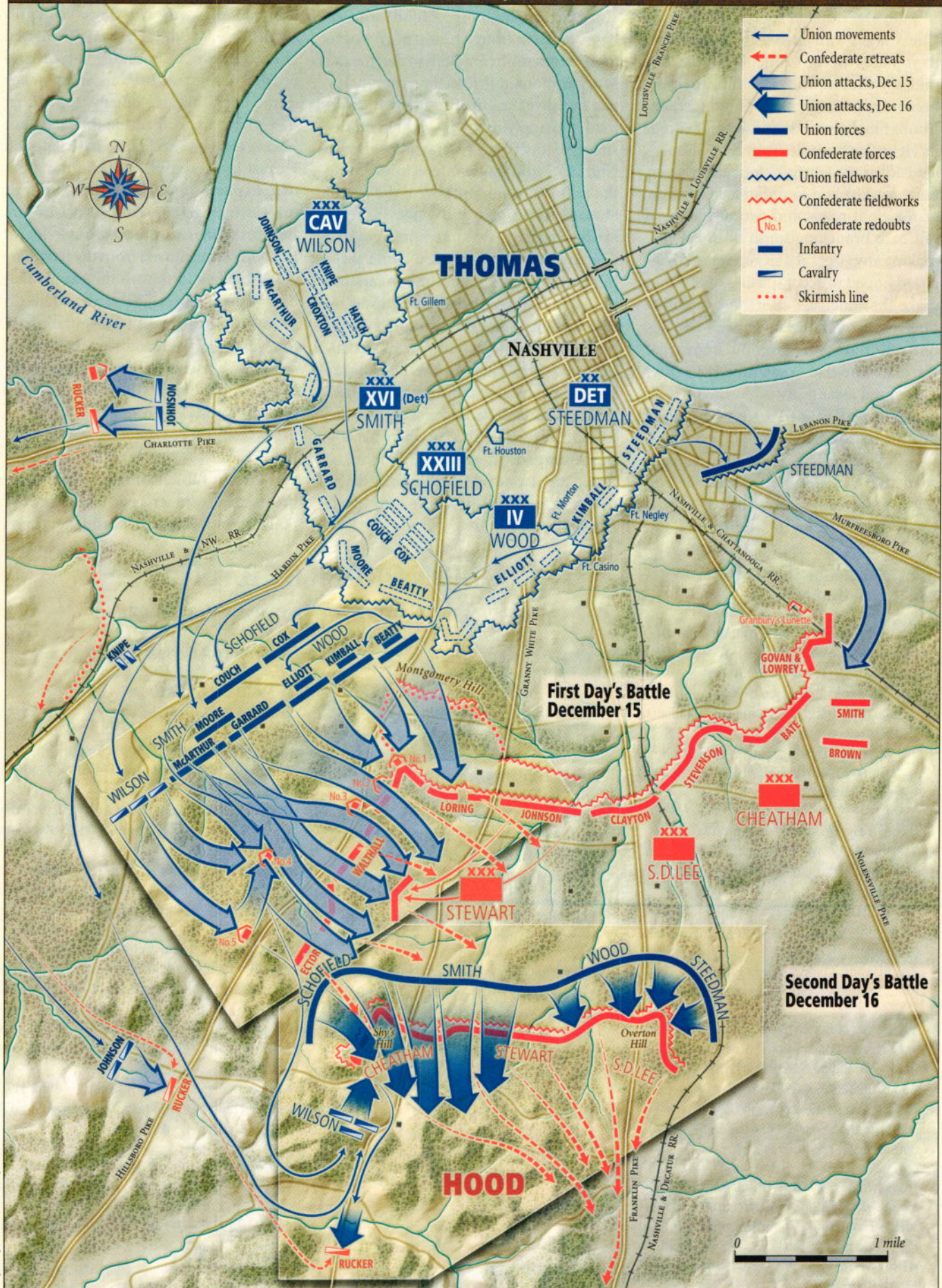
In Washington D.C. Thomas' telegram created a major eruption. Chief of Staff Henry Halleck was upset enough to bring it to the attention of Abraham Lincoln, and the president, with visions of rebels bathing in the Ohio River, called in General-in-Chief Ulysses S. Grant. No fan of Thomas, Grant sent off two messages that practically ordered Thomas to attack Hood immediately. Of course, the

concerns emanating from Washington had to be puzzling to Thomas. The naval presence near Nashville prevented any large rebel force from crossing the Cumberland, and Grant's advice to arm civilians to man the trenches appeared positively arcane. Thomas responded late on the 2nd with a well-reasoned argument that the disparate elements of his makeshift army needed organizing and that the cavalry would soon be ready. He concluded, "I earnestly hope, however, that in a few more days I shall be able to give [Hood] a fight."<sup>14</sup>

There was one more piece of unfinished business. Brigadier General George Wagner's actions at Franklin had led to the destruction of two Federal brigades and nearly cost Schofield the battle. Wagner tried to cover his tracks, but his subalterns put no truck in protecting their commander. Thomas agreed. After reviewing Colonel Joseph Conrad's vituperative report on Franklin and interviewing Emerson Opdycke, the army commander relieved George Wagner and sent him home.



## BATTLE OF NASHVILLE DECEMBER 15-16, 1864





\* \* \*

On December 3, when the men of Cheatham's and Stewart's corps took their places on the Confederate line, the military shortcomings of the situation became appallingly clear. Hood's 22,000 troops filled a line barely four miles long, its right flank a mile from the Cumberland River, its left fully four miles from the river. The line commanded only four of the eight roads and two of the three railroads branching south from the city, making any effort at a siege a sham. What Hood hoped to accomplish—other than make that one, last effort to resuscitate the Cause—and how he hoped to do it is difficult to see. It is certainly ironic that the man who had argued the efficacy of the frontal assault just a few days before had now settled into a static defensive posture in hopes that the Yankees might foolishly attack him. But out on the railroad that ran between Nashville and Murfreesboro, Bedford Forrest unwittingly was planting a seed that would

grow to become the strategic core of Hood's campaign.

On the 2nd, while Hood ordered Bate's division from Cheatham's corps to proceed east from Franklin to destroy the Murfreesboro rail line, Forrest already had two divisions trotting along the railroad and applying their well-honed destructive touch. However, at Blockhouse Number 2, things got interesting. Riding the rails from the south were the last of Steedman's troops, and when Forrest's artillery destroyed the train's engine, Colonel Lewis Johnson led some three hundred Federals out of the box cars and onto a hill, where they quickly threw up obstructions. Forrest's men spent the afternoon trying to subdue the bluecoats, but the Northerners in the blockhouse and Johnson's boys on the hilltop held them off. After dark, Johnson determined to fight his way out, but when his column jumped off around 3:30 a.m., it found the way north wide open. By dawn, the grateful Unionists were safe inside Nashville's defenses.

Forrest continued to work his way south, capturing three more blockhouses over the following two days. With this string of easy victories, an inspired Hood began to regard the eight thousand Federals at Murfreesboro as somehow key to the operation. He openly hoped that they might try to abandon the place, but Hood eventually decided to have Bate and Forrest lay siege to the city, in the quixotic expectation that Thomas might march to its rescue. And so it was that Bedford Forrest, Hood's most lethal weapon, was removed from the front line at Nashville and sent to the rear. Brigadier General James Chalmers and his division would patrol the no-man's-land four miles west of Hood's left flank, while some 250 horsemen picketed the Confederate right. Hood's best cavalryman would be nowhere in sight.

\* \* \*

Forrest's absence made two developments on December 3 particularly ironic. Some six miles west of Nashville, near a

## UNION ORDER OF BATTLE

Major General George H. Thomas, Commanding

IV  **BRIGADIER GENERAL THOMAS J. WOOD**

I  **Brigadier General Nathan Kimball**  
**1st Brigade:** Colonel Isaac M. Kirby — 21st, 38th Illinois; 31st, 81st Indiana; 90th Ohio  
**2nd Brigade:** Brigadier General Walter C. Whittaker — 96th, 115th Illinois; 35th Indiana; 21st, 23rd Kentucky; 45th, 51st Ohio  
**3rd Brigade:** Brigadier General William Grose — 75th, 80th, 84th Illinois; 9th, 30th, 36th, 84th Indiana; 77th Pennsylvania

II  **Brig. General Washington L. Elliott**  
**1st Brigade:** Colonel Emerson Opdycke — 36th, 44th, 73rd, 74th, 88th Illinois; 125th Ohio; 24th Wisconsin  
**2nd Brigade:** Colonel John Q. Lane — 100th Illinois; 40th, 57th Indiana; 28th Kentucky; 26th, 97th Ohio  
**3rd Brigade:** Colonel Joseph Conrad — 42nd, 51st, 79th Illinois; 15th Missouri; 64th, 65th Ohio

III  **Brigadier General Samuel Beatty**  
**1st Brigade:** Colonel Abel D. Straight — 89th Illinois; 51st Indiana; 8th Kansas; 15th, 49th Ohio  
**2nd Brigade:** Colonel P. Sidney Post (w) — 59th Illinois; 41st, 71st, 93rd, 124th Ohio  
**3rd Brigade:** Colonel Frederick Knefler — 79th, 86th Indiana; 13th, 19th Ohio

IV  **Major Wilbur F. Goodspeed**  
**Light Batteries:** 25th Indiana (Sturm); 1st Kentucky (Thomason); 1st Michigan (De Vries); 1st Ohio G (Marshall); 6th Ohio (Baldwin); Battery B Pennsylvania Light Artillery (Ziegler); Battery M, 4th U.S. (Canby)

XXXIII  **MAJOR GENERAL JOHN M. SCHOFIELD**

2  **Major General Darius N. Couch**  
**1st Brigade:** Brigadier General Joseph A. Cooper — 130th Indiana; 26th Kentucky; 25th Michigan; 99th Ohio; 3rd, 6th Tennessee  
**2nd Brigade:** Colonel Orlando H. Moore — 107th Illinois; 80th, 129th Indiana; 23rd Michigan; 111th, 118th Ohio  
**3rd Brigade:** Colonel John Mehringer — 91st, 123rd Indiana; 50th, 183rd Ohio  
**Light Batteries:** 13th Indiana (Harvey); 19th Ohio (Wilson)

3  **Brigadier General Jacob D. Cox**  
**1st Brigade:** Colonel Charles C. Doolittle — 12th, 16th Kentucky; 100th, 104th Ohio; 8th Tennessee  
**2nd Brigade:** Colonel John S. Casement — 65th Illinois; 65th, 124th Indiana; 103rd Ohio; 5th Tennessee  
**3rd Brigade:** Colonel Israel N. Stiles — 112th Illinois; 63rd, 120th, 128th Indiana  
**Light Batteries:** 23rd Indiana (Wilber); Battery D, 1st Ohio (Cockerill)

**Detachment Army of the Tennessee**

XXX  **MAJOR GENERAL ANDREW J. SMITH**

I  **Brigadier General John McArthur**  
**1st Brigade:** Colonel William L. McMillan — 114th Illinois; 93rd Indiana; 10th Minnesota  
**2nd Brigade:** Colonel Lucius F. Hubbard — 5th, 9th Minnesota; 11th Missouri; 8th Wisconsin; 2nd Battery Iowa Light Artillery (Reed)  
**3rd Brigade:** Colonel Sylvester G. Hill (k), Colonel William R. Marshall — 12th, 35th Iowa; 7th Minnesota; 33rd Missouri; Battery I 2nd Missouri Light Artillery (Julian)

II  **Brigadier General Kenner Garrard**  
**1st Brigade:** Colonel David Moore — 119th, 122nd Illinois; 89th Indiana; 21st Missouri; 9th Battery Indiana Light Artillery (Calfee)  
**2nd Brigade:** Colonel James L. Gilbert — 58th Illinois; 27th, 32nd Iowa; 10th Kansas; 3rd Battery Indiana Light Artillery (Ginn)  
**3rd Brigade:** Colonel Edward H. Wolfe — 49th, 117th Illinois; 52nd Indiana; 178th New York; Battery G 2nd Illinois Light Artillery (Lowell)

III  **Colonel Jonathan B. Moore**  
**1st Brigade:** Colonel Lyman M. Ward — 72nd Illinois; 40th Missouri; 14th, 33rd Wisconsin  
**2nd Brigade:** Colonel Leander Blanden — 81st, 95th Illinois; 44th Missouri  
**Artillery:** 11th Battery Indiana Light Artillery (Morse); Battery A 2nd Missouri Light Artillery (Zepp)

k= killed; w= wounded;  = infantry;

 = cavalry; xxx = corps; xx = division



spot on the Cumberland opposite Bell's Mill, the 12th Tennessee Cavalry and Lieutenant Colonel David Kelley's two-gun battery approached the river. Suddenly a Federal transport came steaming by, prompting Kelley to post his artillery on some high ground. Presently two more transports hove into view, whereupon Kelley's frowning guns forced their capitulation. The Confederates scrambled over both vessels, capturing fifty-six surprised Federals, 197 of their horses and mules, and a welcome load of "Yankee stock." One lucky trooper made off with a new McClellan saddle, a winter-worthy blanket, two oilcloths, "and a big, hairy cloak, cape or talma—never knew exactly what." Recalled the appreciative Southern, "It was better suited to fit a sea lion than a man; but it was warm."<sup>15</sup>

It was little skin off the Confederate noses when three Federal gunboats ar-

rived after dark and recaptured the now-empty boats. For the rest of the night the Federal flotilla "carried on a most vigorous shelling" in an attempt to neutralize Kelley's guns. For the Southerners it seemed little more than a grand game, as one would later write, "Some of the boys had gotten full of booze, and every time a shell came close to us, they would yell as loud as they could, then pile brush on the fire and make a light, so the Yankees knew where to aim their cannon." But the Confederates sobered up enough to drive off two subsequent Union attempts to run their position on the 6th and 8th. When two more guns arrived, David Kelley had all the firepower he needed to control the Cumberland River.<sup>16</sup>

The second development was George Thomas' decision to transfer Wilson's battered command across the

river to Edgefield to rest and refit. He was fully justified in exhibiting concern for his cavalry. It was a plain fact that Forrest had handled Wilson roughly since Hood crossed the Tennessee. It was also a fact that Wilson's people were in terrible shape after the exertions of the campaign. But Thomas' concern was also based on his calculation that Forrest outnumbered Wilson decisively, when in fact Wilson held the edge; it evidently never occurred to Thomas that Forrest might be in as bad shape as his Union counterpart. It made sense for Thomas to get his cavalry back into fighting trim, but the general had unknowingly centered his actions on a threat that simply was no longer there.

\* \* \*

Over the next few days, both sides fell into something of a routine. As engineers paced the lines analyzing the terrain and looking for weak points, the men would suddenly get orders to pick up their gear, move to a new location, and dig a new set of defenses. Typical was the odyssey of one Illini, who wrote, "Since we have landed here, we have been placed in four different positions." But the monotony could change quickly, especially when the Federal guns roared into action. And since Hood had ordered all his artillery to conserve ammunition, the Federal heavy metal dominated the field. Constant too was the picket fire, some of which coursed through the camps of the 7th Minnesota from Smith's corps. But of particular interest to the Federals was the presence of Nashville's citizens. One group of civilians raised the ire of the engineers when they wandered too close to the work details, and the well-dressed unfortunates quickly found themselves upturning the earth with the lowliest of privates. Another group visited the outer line; they tarried until a rebel minié zipped past one man's ear. "I shall not ever forget his scared comical expression," wrote a Northern eyewitness, "or the haste with which he decamped." But there was no such humor at Schofield's headquarters. Hanging in bloody array were the rebel flags captured at Franklin, and nearby a corporal's guard stood twenty-four hour watch. "Some of the Rebel citizens look at them with sorrowing countenances," wrote an Ohioan, adding ominously that "the guard has to keep a sharp eye on all sutch."<sup>17</sup>

#### Provisional Detachment, District of the Etowah

XXX  
MAJOR GENERAL  
JAMES B. STEEDMAN

XX  
Provisional Division:  
Brigadier General Charles Cruft

**1st Colored Brigade:** Colonel Thomas J. Morgan — 14th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 44th U.S. Colored Troops

**2nd Colored Brigade:** Colonel Charles R. Thompson — 12th, 13th, 100th U.S. Colored Troops; 1st Battery Kansas Light Artillery (Tennessee)

**1st Brigade:** Colonel Benjamin Harrison — 3 battalions from 20th Army Corps

**2nd Brigade:** Colonel John C. Mitchell — men from detached duty Army of the Tennessee

**3rd Brigade:** Lieutenant Colonel Charles H. Grosvenor — 68th Indiana; 18th, 121st Ohio; 2nd Battalion 14th Army Corps

**Artillery:** 20th Battery Indiana Light Artillery (Osborne); 18th Battery Ohio Light Artillery (Aleshire)

XX  
Post of Nashville:  
Brigadier General John F. Miller

**Brigade:** (20th Army Corps, 4th Division, 2nd Brigade) Colonel Edwin C. Mason — 142nd Indiana; 45th New York; 176th, 179th, 182nd Ohio

**Unattached:** 3rd Kentucky; 28th Michigan; 173rd Ohio; 78th Pennsylvania; Veteran Reserve Corps; 44th, 45th Wisconsin

**Garrison Artillery:** Light Batteries: Bridge's Illinois (White); 2nd (Whicher); 4th (Johnson); 12th (White); 21st (Andrew); 22nd (Nicholson); 24th (Allen) Indiana Batteries; Battery F, 1st Michigan (Paddock); Batteries A (Scovill), E (Reckard) 1st Ohio; 20th Ohio Battery (Backus); Batteries C (Grisby), D (Leinert), 1st Tennessee; Battery A, 2nd U.S. Colored (Meigs)

XX  
Quartermaster's Division: Brevet Brigadier General James L. Donaldson — Quartermaster's employees manning trenches

XXX  
MAJOR GENERAL  
JAMES H. WILSON

XX  
1 Brigadier General Edward M. McCook

**1st Brigade:** Brigadier General John T. Croxton — 8th Iowa; 4th Kentucky Mounted Infantry; 2nd Michigan; 1st Tennessee; Board of Trade Battery, Illinois Light Artillery (Robinson)

**2nd Brigade:** Colonel Oscar H. La Grange — Detached in pursuit of Lyon's raid into western Kentucky

**3rd Brigade:** Bvt. Brigadier General Louis D. Watkins — Detached in pursuit of Lyon's raid into western Kentucky

XX  
5 Brigadier General Edward Hatch  
**1st Brigade:** Colonel Robert R. Stewart — 3rd Illinois; 11th Indiana; 12th Missouri; 10th Tennessee

**2nd Brigade:** Colonel Datus E. Coon — 6th, 7th, 9th Illinois; 2nd Iowa; 12th Tennessee; Battery I 1st Illinois Light Artillery (McCartney)

XX  
6 Brig. General Richard W. Johnson  
**1st Brigade:** Colonel Thomas J. Harrison — 16th Illinois; 5th Iowa; 7th Ohio

**2nd Brigade:** Colonel James Biddle — 14th Illinois; 6th Indiana; 8th Michigan; 3rd Tennessee

**Artillery:** Battery I 4th U.S. (Frank G. Smith)

XX  
7 Brigadier General Joseph F. Knipe  
**1st Brigade:** Bvt. Brigadier General John H. Hammond — 9th, 10th Indiana; 19th Pennsylvania; 2nd, 4th Tennessee

**2nd Brigade:** Colonel Gilbert M.L. Johnson — 12th, 13th Indiana; 8th Tennessee

**Artillery:** 14th Battery Ohio Light Artillery (Myers)



To the south, while the Confederates kneaded their fortifications into place, Hood and his officers settled into the genteel atmosphere of Traveler's Rest, John Overton's spacious home near the Franklin Pike. Female company was abundant, prompting Stephen Lee to admit to his wife, "The ladies are all beautiful and assimilated with the general features of the noble country." In fact, one of those ladies, Mary Hadley, was engaged to Hood staffer Major William Clare, and their rushed wedding plans were in their final stages. It was a rare interlude as music and conversation filled the air, allowing the grizzled Southern officers to forget for a moment that battle beckoned just up the road.<sup>18</sup>

\* \* \*

Major General Lovell Rousseau sat in his headquarters in Murfreesboro and considered his options. Just before his telegraphic lifeline to Nashville was cut on the 2nd, Rousseau had received orders from George Thomas to hold the town against anything that was thrown against him. He certainly felt somewhat secure as his center of defense, Fortress Rosecrans, was a massive work, well armed and well provisioned. But on December 4, when gunfire erupted to the northwest, Rousseau sent off Colonel Gilbert Johnson and the 13th Indiana Cavalry to find its source. Picking up a detachment of the 5th Tennessee (Union) Cavalry, Johnson discovered that Blockhouse No. 7 was under attack. He sent word of the

fight to Rousseau, then advanced to Overall Creek and deployed to face the threat.

Rousseau acted quickly by ordering forward Major General Robert Milroy and three regiments to quell the raiders. Milroy had been the recipient of General Richard Ewell's thrashing at Winchester early in the Gettysburg Campaign, and the general still smarted from whispers about his conduct there. Anxious to prove himself a fighter, Milroy shook out his three regiments, and as darkness began to cover the ground, he ordered his whole line to attack. Well posted on a hilltop, rebel artillery bruised the charging troopers, but Milroy's infantry pierced the enemy battle line and came back with prisoners. Expecting to find Confederate

## CONFEDERATE ORDER OF BATTLE

General John Bell Hood, Commanding



### LEE'S CORPS

Lieutenant General Stephen D. Lee



### JOHNSON'S DIVISION

Major General Edward Johnson (c)

**Deas' Brigade:** Brigadier General Zachariah C. Deas — 19th, 22nd, 25th, 38th, 50th Alabama

**Manigault's Brigade:** Lieutenant Colonel William L. Butler — 24th, 28th, 34th Alabama; 10th, 19th South Carolina

**Sharp's Brigade:** Brigadier General Jacob H. Sharp — 7th, 9th, 10th, 41st, 44th Mississippi; 9th Battalion Miss. Sharpshooters

**Brantley's Brigade:** Brigadier General William F. Brantley — 24th, 27th, 29th, 30th, 34th Mississippi; Dismounted Cavalry Company



### STEVENSON'S DIVISION

Major General Carter L. Stevenson

**Cummings' Brigade:** Colonel Elihu P. Watkins — 24th, 36th, 39th, 56th Georgia

**Pettus' Brigade:** Brigadier General Edmund W. Pettus — 20th, 23rd, 30th, 31st, 46th Alabama



### CLAYTON'S DIVISION

Major General Henry D. Clayton

**Stovall's Brigade:** Brigadier General Marcellus A. Stovall — 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 52nd Georgia

**Gibson's Brigade:** Brigadier General Randall L. Gibson — 1st, 4th, 13th, 16th, 19th, 20th, 25th, 30th Louisiana; 4th La. Battalion; 14th La. Battalion Sharpshooters

**Holtzclaw's Brigade:** Brigadier General James Holtzclaw — 18th, 32nd, 36th, 38th, 58th Alabama



### STEWART'S CORPS

Lt. General Alexander P. Stewart



### LORING'S DIVISION

Major General William W. Loring

**Featherston's Brigade:** Brigadier General Winfield S. Featherston — 1st, 3rd, 22nd, 31st, 33rd, 40th Mississippi; 1st Mississippi Battalion

**Adams' Brigade:** Colonel Robert Lowery — 6th, 14th, 15th, 20th, 23rd, 43rd Mississippi

**Scott's Brigade:** Colonel John Snodgrass — 27th, 35th, 49th, 55th, 57th Alabama; 12th Louisiana



### FRENCH'S DIVISION

Brigadier General Claudius Sears (w, c)

**Ector's Brigade:** Colonel David Coleman — 29th, 30th North Carolina; 9th Texas; 10th, 14th, 32nd Texas Cavalry

**Cockrell's Brigade:** Colonel Peter C. Flournoy — 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th Missouri; 1st Missouri Cavalry; 3rd Missouri Cavalry Battalion

**Sears' Brigade:** Lieutenant Colonel Reuben H. Shotwell — 4th, 35th, 36th, 39th, 46th Mississippi; 7th Mississippi Battalion



### WALTHALE'S DIVISION

Major General Edward C. Walthall

**Quarles' Brigade:** Brigadier General George D. Johnson — 1st Alabama; 42nd, 46th, 48th, 49th, 53rd, 55th Tennessee

**Cantley's Brigade:** Brigadier General Charles M. Shelley — 17th, 26th, 29th Alabama; 37th Mississippi

**Reynolds' Brigade:** Brigadier General Daniel H. Reynolds — 4th, 9th, 25th Arkansas; 1st, 2nd Ark. Mounted Rifles



### CHEATHAM'S CORPS

Major General Benjamin F. Cheatham



### CLEBURNE'S DIVISION

Brigadier General James A. Smith

**Govan's Brigade:** Brigadier General Daniel C. Govan — 1st, 2nd, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 13th, 15th, 19th, 24th Arkansas

**Lowrey's Brigade:** Lieutenant Colonel R.H. Abercrombie — 16th, 33rd, 45th Alabama; 5th, 8th, 32nd Mississippi; 3rd Miss. Battalion

**Granbury's Brigade:** Captain E.t. Broughton — 5th Confederate; 35th Tennessee; 6th, 7th, 10th, 15th Texas; 17th, 18th, 24th, 25th Texas Cavalry; Nutt's Louisiana Cavalry

**Smith's Brigade:** Colonel Charles H. Olmstead — 54th, 57th, 63rd Georgia; 1st Georgia Volunteers



### BROWN'S DIVISION

Brigadier General Mark P. Lowrey

**Gist's Brigade:** Lieutenant Colonel Zachariah L. Watters — 46th, 65th Georgia; 2nd Battalion Ga. Sharpshooters; 16th, 24th South Carolina

**Maney's Brigade:** Colonel Hume R. Field — 1st, 4th, 6th, 8th, 9th, 16th, 27th, 28th, 50th Tennessee

**Strahl's Brigade:** Colonel Andrew J. Kellar — 4th, 5th, 19th, 24th, 31st, 33rd, 38th, 41st Tennessee

**Vaughan's Brigade:** Colonel William M. Watkins — 11th, 12th, 13th, 29th, 47th, 51st, 52nd, 154th Tennessee



### BATE'S DIVISION

Major General William B. Bate

**Tyler's Brigade:** Brigadier General Thomas Benton Smith (w, c) — 37th Georgia; 4th Battalion Ga. Sharpshooters; 2nd, 10th, 20th, 37th Tennessee

**Finley's Brigade:** Colonel Robert Bullock, Major Jacob A. Lash — 1st, 3rd, 4th, 6th, 7th Florida; 1st Fla. Cavalry

**Jackson's Brigade:** Brigadier General Henry R. Jackson (c) — 25th, 29th, 30th Georgia; 1st Ga. Confederate; 1st Battalion Ga. Sharpshooters

w = wounded; c = captured; ■ = infantry; ■ = artillery; ■ = cavalry; xxx = corps; xx = division



cavalrymen under guard, Milroy was more than a little surprised when the captives turned out to be infantrymen from Bate's division, prompting the general to order an immediate and hasty retreat.

Bate himself remained hunkered down the morning of the 5th near Blockhouse No. 7 when Forrest arrived and took command. After the cavalryman explained Hood's instructions, the combined force gingerly approached Fortress Rosecrans. Bate took one look at the powerful earthwork and begged off any thought of an attack. For his part, Forrest took some time reconnoitering the enemy positions and came to the same conclusion. Instead, Forrest set his people to work constructing a line of earthworks

in the hopes that the Yankees would venture out from under their protective guns and attack. Bolstered now by Sears' and Palmer's brigades, Forrest had his six thousand men hard at labor northwest of Fortress Rosecrans through the 7th, when the Yankees suddenly came calling.

Rousseau was surprised by the aggressiveness of the "impudent" rebs, so he gave Milroy a combined infantry-cavalry-artillery column of 3,325 men and ordered him to locate the enemy. Milroy marched out of Fortress Rosecrans midmorning on the 7th and wound southwest down the Salem Pike. Not quite four miles out, a local farmer revealed that Forrest was up near the Wilkinson Pike near its intersection with Grisham Lane,

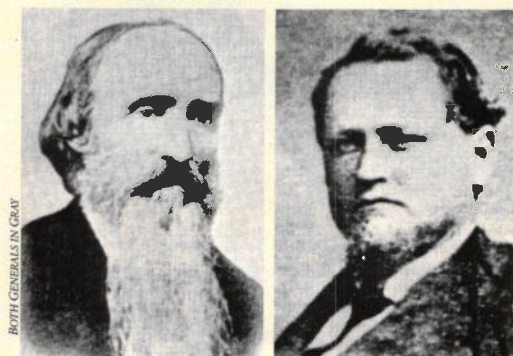
so Milroy angled his force to the north. Of course, Forrest monitored Milroy's progress the entire time, and was just then preparing something of a trap for the Yankees. With his left anchored on the Wilkinson Pike and his right protected by Overall

Creek, Forrest shook out a battle line facing to the southeast—augmented by "breastworks made of logs and rails"—in the hopes of forcing Milroy to deploy accordingly. If all went well, Forrest would then launch his cavalry at Milroy's right flank, isolating the enemy from their fortress and assuring their destruction. With a muddy cotton field providing open terrain for his artillery, Forrest anxiously awaited the Unionists.<sup>19</sup>

Milroy came upon Forrest's position and immediately deployed his six guns. For the next hour, Milroy reported that "a magnificent artillery duel" shook the neighborhood, but neither side seemed inclined the attack. As the Federal red-legs ran through their ammunition, Milroy may have come to realize the weakness of his position: both sides were now equidistant from Fortress Rosecrans. He "deemed it prudent" to order a disengagement and redeploy his command back a few hundred yards to a stand of cedars that had played so prominently in the Stones River fight nearly two years before. Behind a sheltering ridge Milroy then led his men to the northeast. When he reached the Wilkinson Pike, the general redeployed his boys facing to the west and launched them at the impudent rebs.<sup>20</sup>

Bate later admitted that he took the enemy disappearance to indicate a retreat, so it was quite a shock when two lines of bluecoats came rolling toward his left flank. He tried to realign his command, but one blunder followed another. Palmer and Finley managed to sidle their men nearer the Pike, but, on orders directly from Bate, Sears and Brigadier General H. R. Jackson pulled their brigades north of the roadway, forcing Bate and his staff to chase them down. Meanwhile, Milroy's men were plastering the poorly formed Confederates with a wave of riflery, and when the grayclad line showed some wavering, the Federals spontaneously took up the charge.

Forrest waded into Finley's Floridians and begged them for time so he could maneuver his horsemen to the Federal rear, but after a few minutes, his plan disintegrated. After Franklin, Finley's men had exchanged their worn-out clothes for captured Federal uniforms. Jackson's returning Georgians had been ordered to support Tyler's hard-pressed brigade and "save our guns," but Jackson couldn't find Tyler's command and his people evidently mistook Finley's newly outfitted



Brigadier General Claudius Sears of French's division (left) and Colonel Robert Bullock of Finley's brigade.

XXX

#### LEE'S CORPS

Major John W. Johnston

**Courtney's Battalion:** Captain James P. Douglas — Dent's Alabama Battery; Douglas' Texas Battery; Garritty's Alabama Battery

**Eldridge's Battalion:** Captain Charles E. Fenner — Eufaula Alabama Battery; Fenner's Louisiana Battery; Stanford's Mississippi Battery

**Johnson's Battalion:** Captain John B. Rowan — Corput's Georgia Battery; Marshall's Tennessee Battery; Stephens' Light Artillery

XXX

#### STEWART'S CORPS

Lt. Colonel Samuel C. Williams

**Truehart's Battalion:** Lumsden's Alabama Battery; Selden's Alabama Battery

**Myrick's Battalion:** Bouanchaud's Louisiana Battery; Cowan's Mississippi Battery; Darden's Mississippi Battery

**Storrs' Battalion:** Guiborps Missouri Battery; Hoskin's Mississippi Battery; Kolb's Alabama Battery

XXX

#### CHEATHAM'S CORPS

Colonel Melancthon Smith

**Battalion:** Perry's Florida Battery; Phelan's Alabama Battery; Turner's Mississippi Battery

**Hotchkiss' Battalion:** Bledsoe's Missouri Battery; Goldtwaiter's Alabama Battery; Key's Arkansas Battery

**Cobb's Battalion:** Ferguson's South Carolina Battery; Phillip's Tennessee Battery; Slocumb's Louisiana Battery

XXX

#### MAJOR GENERAL

NATHAN BEDFORD FORREST

XX

#### CHALMERS' DIVISION

Brigadier General James R. Chalmers

**Rucker's Brigade:** Colonel Edmund W. Rucker (w,c) — 7th Alabama; 5th Mississippi; 7th, 12th, 14th, 15th Tennessee; Forrest's Regiment Tennessee Cavalry

**Biffle's Brigade:** Colonel Jacob B. Biffle — 10th Tennessee

XX

#### BUFORD'S DIVISION

Brigadier General Abraham Buford

**Bell's Brigade:** Colonel Tyree H. Bell — 2nd, 19th, 20th, 21st Tennessee; Nixon's Tennessee Regiment

**Crossland's Brigade:** Colonel Edward Crossland — 3rd, 7th, 8th, 12th Kentucky Mounted Infantry; 12th Kentucky; Huey's Kentucky Battalion

XX

#### JACKSON'S DIVISION

Brigadier General William H. Jackson

**Armstrong's Brigade:** Brigadier General Frank C. Armstrong — 1st, 2nd, 28th Mississippi; Ballentine's Mississippi Regiment

**Ross' Brigade:** Brigadier General Lawrence S. Ross — 5th, 6th, 9th Texas; 1st Texas Legion

**Artillery:** Morton's Tennessee Battery



men for the enemy and gave them a volley. Believing themselves surrounded, the Floridians broke for the rear.<sup>21</sup>

Forrest saw the breakdown and tried to stem the tide. He bellowed out, "Rally, men—for God's sake rally!" but his men were having none of it. One unit's flagbearer refused to stop on the cavalryman's orders, so Forrest shot him dead and raised the flag himself. It was of no use. Milroy's men sliced through the remaining Confederates and sent the entire line reeling, collecting 207 prisoners, two flags, and two artillery pieces. Luckily for the Confederates, at the height of Milroy's triumph word came from Rousseau to withdraw. Intelligence had arrived—later to prove false—that a large rebel force was angling toward Murfreesboro from the north, and Rousseau didn't want Milroy dangling dangerously out on a limb. The jubilant Federals collected their booty and fell back to their fortress, overjoyed that they had "whipped [Forrest] like a turkey." Of the so-called Battle of the Cedars, Milroy would write with more than a dollop of self-satisfaction, "It is in many respects the best fight of the war," but even one of Forrest's own had to admit that the fight along the Wilkinson Pike was the "hardest blow" the enemy managed to land on the "Wizard of the Saddle" in the entire war.<sup>22</sup>

Over the next few days, Forrest tried to forget the "disgraceful conduct" of his men, but his makeshift command was fracturing. On the 8th Bate angered Jackson when he complimented Brigadier General Thomas Benton Smith's handling of Tyler's brigade in the Cedars fight, and downplayed Jackson's efforts. For his part, Jackson would soon beg Cheatham to transfer him and his men away from Bate's command. Hood exacerbated the situation that same day by ordering Bate to return to Nashville, and forcing Forrest to relocate most of his remaining infantry to La Vergne. Then, on the 9th, Hood had Forrest send Brigadier General Abraham Buford's division to Lebanon near the Cumberland River to protect that area from enemy thrusts. Through Hood's strategic gyrations, Nathan Bedford Forrest now sat with a depleted command incapable of accomplishing anything of value, as he found there was little his force could do to prevent the Federals from foraging at will. Other than removing Forrest from the

playing field, Hood's halfhearted attempt to turn Murfreesboro into the lynchpin of the campaign had come to nothing.<sup>23</sup>

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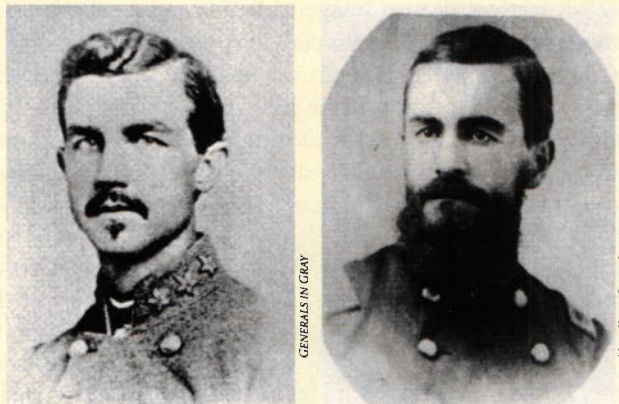
While Forrest and Rousseau sparred around Murfreesboro, George Thomas was fighting his own personal war. On the 5th Ulysses Grant had cajoled him to attack Hood as soon as possible, but Thomas' response—that he awaited the refitting of his cavalry to begin the assault—did little to satisfy Grant. On the afternoon of the 6th Grant fired off a direct order to "[a]ttack Hood at once, and wait no longer for a remount of your cavalry." Suddenly Thomas seemed ready, answering later that day that he would begin preparations to attack the rebels. But he again voiced his concerns over the weakness of his cavalry, and appeared willing to delay the assault until he was fully satisfied with his dispositions. The Rock of Chickamauga was going to fight this battle on his terms, and no one was going to change his mind.<sup>24</sup>

Grant seemed ready, but hardly anxious, to replace Thomas for his perceived lethargy. He, Halleck, and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton were trading barbs over Thomas' cautious approach to battle, and the trio apparently shared the general fear that Hood might cross the Cumberland and race for the Ohio. It certainly didn't help Thomas' case that someone in Nashville (Steedman fingered John Schofield as the culprit) was describing the situation there in the most disparaging terms. On December 9 Grant informed Halleck that Thomas should be replaced with Schofield, an ironic choice given the camp whispers over the intrigue. That afternoon, Halleck drew up the corresponding orders. Little did the Washington brass realize that a new element had reared its powerful head two days before, and changed completely the complexion of the campaign.

\* \* \*

At Nashville, December 7 was proving to be a boringly typical day. As pickets exchanged the occasional rifle shot,

opposing bands took up a musical exchange, much to both armies' entertainment. East of the Franklin Pike, a short skirmish broke out when Steedman ordered a brigade south "to feel the enemy's strength." However, around noon the men noticed "a sudden squall of wind and rain." Within the hour the temperature began to drop, and by evening "real wintry weather" swept across the region. As one wag put it, "The sunny south has caught a terrible cold."<sup>25</sup>



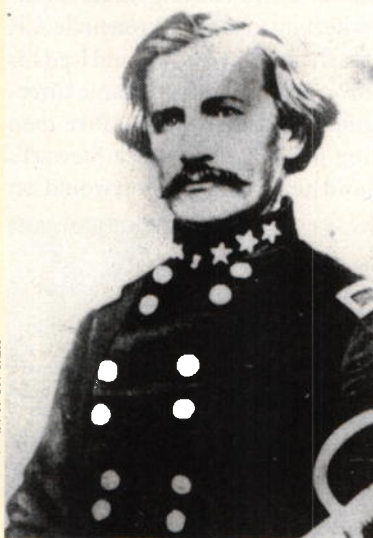
Brigadier General Thomas Benton Smith of Tyler's brigade (left) and Colonel Israel Stiles of Cox's division.

For the Confederates, the change in the weather brought on hardships difficult to imagine. Many of the Southerners were without blankets and shoes, and although their quartermasters were able to get some food to the front, there was little in the way of replacement clothing to relieve the suffering. Compounding the problem, the area had been nearly denuded of trees, and the wind whipped mercilessly across the plain. Then, to make matters worse, as the sun set on the 8th, the arctic blast dumped sleet and snow on the shivering soldiers for most of the night. The next day, the Confederate shoe shortage became a crisis. The flimsy footwear that had proven sufficient up to this point gave out in the ice and the snow. "We were scantily clothed," recalled a chaplain. "Many of us were practically barefooted. The uppers and soles of my shoes were tied together with string." An Alabamian wrote, "Many men were still barefooted, and more becoming every day." The one blanket he still carried "had eighteen bullet holes in it." As winter gripped the heartland, Tennessean William Worsham perhaps put it best: "Ambition, and even life itself, were almost frozen out of us."<sup>26</sup>

Although the Federals found the winter storm difficult to bear, they knew



they could rely on the teeming warehouses of Nashville to offset the bitter cold. Rations and whiskey flowed freely, and one officer even managed to get his regiment relocated to a barracks in the city. Some of the men bought stoves for their tents, while others constructed cabins of various material. In at least one regard, the weather proved a blessing in disguise: the freeze essentially suspended all hostilities, much to the Unionists' delight. Amazingly, one Northerner recalled the snowstorm almost fondly. This Indianan from Colonel Israel Stiles' brigade crawled out from under the snow to find a row of perfectly formed personal igloos. The fallen snow had encased his well-blanketed company mates, serving as improbable protection from the frigid air. He wrote, "The warm breath of each had kept a small opening to the surface, making breathing easier." Still, the temperature he noted had dipped to six below zero.<sup>27</sup>



vision commander Major General Edward Walthall was ordered to oversee the fatigue parties, and he observed with a touch of concern, "Between some of these points there were considerable intervals; in one case as much as 1200 yards or more."<sup>28</sup>

There seemed to be a further disconnect developing in Hood's depleted army. While many of the bedraggled Confederates dug holes into the ground to protect themselves from the elements, while some of the Southern pickets froze to death at the front, and while grayclad infantrymen tied rags around their bloody feet to ward off the icy ground, Confederate officers were enjoying the benefits of rank. One cavalryman remembered, "General Chalmers and his staff were the guests at 'Belle Meade'....Mrs. Harding presided over that grand old house with unsurpassed elegance." And over at Travelers Rest, Frank Cheatham tried to calm a damsel's fears for the suffering soldiers by assuring her that he had just issued his men "four ears of corn apiece."<sup>29</sup>

Left: Major General Benjamin Cheatham  
Below: The Belle Meade mansion, located on the Harding Pike.



★ ★ ★

Although the weather reduced the usual picket and cannon fire, some Confederates found a new calling to take up their time. On the 9th John Bell Hood completed his conversion from offensive-minded to defensive-oriented when he ordered A.P. Stewart to construct self-sustaining detached works to the rear of his left flank. He envisioned batteries supported by infantry commanding the broad approach to Stewart's dangling flank. Three were located around the angle in Stewart's line where it bent south to correspond with the Hillsboro Pike. But the two other redoubts stood dangerously isolated west of the Pike, and the men out on the front line saw the folly of this arrangement. Di-

Over the next few days winter's bitter grip remained firm, but officer and infantryman alike kept to their work. On Saturday the 10th, in near arctic conditions, the Confederates abandoned their defenses on Montgomery Hill just east of the Hillsboro Pike, and pulled back about a mile. The retrograde movement also served to tighten their lines, but the butternuts had felled all the trees in the area and actually relocated to get better access to a timber stand. It was unfortunately typical. What remained of the beautiful stands of trees that once surrounded Nashville continued to disap-

pear "remorselessly... before the axes of the soldiers."<sup>30</sup>

Also remorseless was the pressure on Thomas from his superiors to attack the rebels in their snow-covered defenses. To appease his superiors, Nashville's commander had reluctantly targeted the 10th on which to attack Hood, but the weather fouled his plans. Then, when he advised Washington of the setback, Halleck said in no uncertain terms that such behavior could cost him his command. Luckily for all concerned, Grant accepted Thomas' explanation, and Thomas promised his chief, "As soon as we have a thaw, I will attack Hood." Such niceties didn't stop Grant from continuing his prickly barrage and, after a series of telegrams demanding action, Thomas agreed on Sunday to launch his assault on the 13th. Soon, directives to this effect circulated to his subalterns.<sup>31</sup>

At his headquarters in Edgefield, James Wilson faced the most difficulties readying for the upcoming battle. On the night of the 11th, another storm blanketed the area, and the next day when Wilson ordered his troopers across the river to their concentration point west on the Charlotte Pike, his horsemen faced the near-impossible task of guiding their mounts across a veritable sheet of ice. It took all day for the cavalryman to get his 12,500 troops across the Cumberland and out of Nashville. To add insult to injury, when the exhausted bluecoats reached their destination, they found the ground too frozen to pitch their tents.

With visions of Wilson's command struggling across Nashville's icebound streets fresh in his mind, Thomas called for a council of war. Accordingly, at three o'clock on the afternoon of the 12th, the brass convened at Thomas' headquarters in the St. Cloud Hotel. The commander let his people speak, and he was mightily gratified by their response. Led by Wilson's opening remarks, all heartily supported Thomas' actions, save the stonily silent John Schofield. Thus bolstered, Thomas telegraphed Halleck at 10:30 p.m. that the ice storm demanded that the attack of the 13th be delayed, and that he was not about to sacrifice his men uselessly. Interestingly, he did not mention the council of war, nor the near-unanimous support of his subalterns for his decision. It almost seemed that Thomas had become inured to Halleck and



Grant's long-distance grouching. "The Washington authorities treat me as if I were a boy," he complained to Wilson, but he knew he was right, and he knew they were wrong. And if this war proved anything, it showed that one could count on George Thomas to stand firmly, like a rock they would say, when he was defending his territory.<sup>32</sup>

\* \* \*

Grant learned of the latest twist in the drama on the morning of the 13th. Present at his City Point, Virginia, headquarters was Illinoisan major general John Logan, coincidentally visiting his chief in hopes of securing a new command. Grant took one look at Thomas' latest missive and immediately wrote up orders placing Logan in command at Nashville. Grant then ordered "Black Jack" to proceed to Tennessee. If upon his arrival Thomas was still inert, Logan was to inform him of the change in command and take over the reins. Logan saluted and rode off.

\* \* \*

As the sweep of winter continued its bone-chilling clasp, John Hood pressed on with his fevered dispositions. He remained convinced that Murfreesboro held the key to the campaign, and to that end the general transferred Colonel Jacob Biddle's brigade from his west flank to his east, leaving James Chalmers with one brigade to cover the four miles from Stewart's left to the Cumberland. Hood also sent Bate's boys to Cheatham out on the right in the vain hope of upsetting Rousseau's supposed abandonment of Fortress Rosecrans, a tactical turn neither Rousseau nor Thomas were contemplating. However, when intelligence arrived on the 13th that the Federal cavalry was massing west of Nashville, Hood hurriedly ordered Stewart to detach Ector's brigade under Colonel David Coleman to support the jittery James Chalmers. Coleman immediately took up a position west of Richland Creek on a rise north of the Harding Pike, allowing Chalmers to sidle farther north behind the creek to a point bisecting the Charlotte Pike. Along with David Kelley's four guns on the Cumberland, this was all the force Hood could muster to cover his flank.

"There are indications of a favorable change in the weather." With these words, George Thomas gingerly let Henry

Halleck know that the recalcitrant weather seemed to be changing in the Union's favor. Indeed, one Federal officer noted, "The day more pleasant; thawed considerable in the afternoon." Still, pockets of ice blanketed much of the area, slowing considerably a two-brigade Federal thrust along the Murfreesboro Pike. Little was accomplished, but it served to support Hood's mistaken belief that enemy intentions remained focused on Rousseau's isolated command. But as the weather continued to warm through the night and into the 14th, George Thomas knew the time had come. At noon he apprised Smith, Wood, Schofield, and Steedman to ready their men for battle, and later that afternoon at a conference at his headquarters the general put forth his battle plan. By evening the orders were formalized: Thomas' force would attack Hood the next morning.<sup>33</sup>

As the news swept through the army, Thomas took a moment to peruse one last needling telegram from Halleck. It must have given the Virginian more than a little satisfaction to reply calmly that the ice had melted, that the enemy would be attacked on the morrow. That taken care of, Thomas went back to preparing for the fight.

the telegraph lines to Nashville were down and no updates on the Thomas affair were forthcoming. Among the three there was a certain reluctance to replace an officer like Thomas, who had served so conspicuously for so long, but after a less than cordial debate, Grant announced that Thomas would have to go. He wrote out the order and gave it to telegrapher Major Thomas Eckert. As soon as the lines went back up, the news would reach the Rock of Chickamauga that his services to the Union would no longer be needed. Grant then left to ready himself for his trip west.

At almost that exact same moment, George Thomas and his boys were chasing John Bell Hood's army across the hills south of Nashville.

\* \* \*

Thomas' plan of action was brutally efficient in its design. Wilson would take three cavalry divisions and sweep down the Charlotte and Harding Pikes, eventually wheeling to the left to encircle A.P. Stewart's flank. A.J. Smith would lead his three divisions in much the same direction, guiding on the Harding Pike then wheeling to the left to attack Stewart's flank head-on. Thomas Wood would act



Kurz & Allison lithograph of the Battle of Nashville.

\* \* \*

That same day, Ulysses Grant decided his presence was demanded in Nashville to resolve the situation. He went up to Washington and spent the next day meeting with Lincoln, Halleck, and Stanton. To exacerbate the tension,

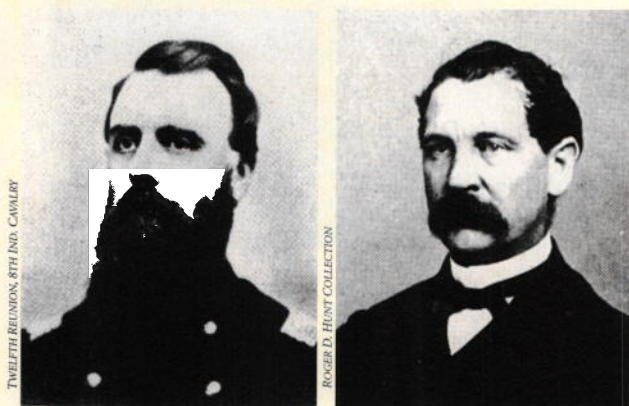
as the pivot of Smith's left wheel, advancing south on the Hillsboro Pike to support Smith's left and attacking the enemy bastion on Montgomery Hill. Steedman's command would bolster the mixed bag peopling the interior lines to prevent any rebel thrusts against the city. Finally, it is



telling that Thomas' initial plans had John Schofield's men doing little more than filling in the trenches abandoned by Wood's advance. However, when Schofield complained of his assignment, Thomas modified the plan to allow Schofield to advance in support of Smith. Thomas also took his subalterns' collective advice and ordered Steedman to demonstrate against the Confederate right flank, evidently realizing that a good offense is a good defense. On Thursday, December 15, reveille would be at 4:00 a.m., attack at 6:00 a.m. Some 54,000 Federal troops would seek out Hood's 20,000 Confederates, and what many assumed to be the last battle for Tennessee would commence.

\* \* \*

It was as if nature felt the need to assert herself one last time. At 4:00 a.m. trumpets blared, and the noise of two stirring armies filled the air. But even in the darkness, the soldiers could tell that a thick fog had blanketed the area, "hiding everything but itself from view." Thomas' people did what they could to open the ball, but delays were everywhere.



Colonel Thomas J. Harrison (left) of Richard W. Johnson's division and Major Thomas Eckert.

By 6:30 p.m. Steedman formed most of his men on the Murfreesboro Pike; there the fog limited vision to less than one hundred yards. His options hamstrung, Steedman called a halt. Meanwhile, Schofield's men felt their way west behind Wood's lines, but few of them were in position when Smith was ready to jump off. Then, at 6:00 a.m., as Smith's troops slowly started south, Brigadier General John McArthur maneuvered to position his division on the corps' right flank. Two hours later, as the fog slowly dissipated, McArthur found himself blocking James Wilson's line of march. Wilson was apoplectic and harsh words flew. But it was

not until around 10:00 a.m., with their front finally clear, that Wilson's riders started down the Harding and Charlotte Pikes.<sup>34</sup>

Brigadier General Richard Johnson led his 6th Cavalry Division—the rightmost command in the Federal attack—down the Charlotte Pike. Just beyond Richland Creek they found Colonel Edmund Rucker's nine-hundred-man brigade from James Chalmers' cavalry division posted on a ridge. Chalmers considered his alignment fairly secure, since he thought David Coleman's brigade was still holding its position behind the creek south at the Harding Pike. But Coleman's pickets quickly reported the "vast" Federal advance to headquarters, and Coleman was shocked when he rode out and saw its size. An officer of the 14th Texas recalled, "[Coleman] instructed us to hold the line until forced to retire, then to fall back over the ridge in order, and make a run of about two miles to the Hillsboro Pike, where we should find him with the brigade." With that, Coleman withdrew most of his brigade, leaving Chalmers little more than a skirmish line to protect his exposed right flank. What

was worse, he failed to tell anyone of his actions.<sup>35</sup>

Luckily for Chalmers, Johnson seemed disinclined to search for tactical advantages. He threw Colonel James Biddle's dismounted brigade directly at the ridge. It proved to be an unfortunate choice. Encumbered by their sabres and unfamiliar with infantry maneuvers, Biddle's men embarrassingly ground to a halt far short of their goal. To add some energy to the assault, Johnson launched Colonel Thomas Harrison's mounted brigade around Biddle's left flank, but stone walls and rebel artillery blunted the thrust. By the time Johnson got his men over the creek and up the ridge, Chalmers, Rucker, and the Confederate horse were long gone.

Johnson's progress was unconscionably slow, and the officer was hearing it from his superiors. Chastened, he rallied his command and spent the afternoon pursuing the rebels another four miles down the pike. Suddenly, near Bell's Landing on the Cumberland, Johnson

found Chalmers' men crowning another ridge fronted by another creek. Confederate artillery commanded the lone bridge over the watercourse, and after the 7th Ohio made an ill-fated thrust, Johnson called up Brigadier General John Croxton's brigade from McCook's division for support, and requested that the navy send some gunboats down river to flank the rebel position. The last request was particularly ironic, since a Federal flotilla had engaged David Kelley's guns earlier in the day but had withdrawn when Johnson was nowhere to be seen. Instead, with twice the numbers of his grayclad counterpart, Johnson cautiously called off any further action and awaited the arrival of his supports.

\* \* \*

Around 8:00 a.m., as the fog lifted, James Steedman got word to begin his advance. A reconnaissance the night before had seemed to locate a flaw in the rebel works, as their right flank appeared to be "in the air." Additionally, little more than a "curtain" protected its terminus, a half-mile north of an eminence near the Nolensville Pike called Rain's Hill. Steedman designed a tactical plan to take advantage. He would march two brigades out the Murfreesboro Pike past the enemy works and drive his men south, flanking the entire position and forcing the rebels to withdraw. A third brigade would move south along the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad to confuse the graycoated defenders and hopefully apply some pressure to the enemy retreat. If all went well, it would be quick and easy, the kind of victory through maneuver commanders dreamed about.

Colonel Thomas J. Morgan led the advance. He commanded five regiments of African-American soldiers—United States Colored Troops, as they were designated. Behind him marched Lieutenant Colonel Charles Grosvenor and his four-regiment brigade. For two hours, they strode down the Murfreesboro Pike. Executing Steedman's plan, they angled past the rebel flank and took up the attack. Confederate skirmishers melted before the movement, the 14th USCT in the lead, the 17th and 44th USCT close behind. Ahead lay a belt of timber, and in a fit of spirit the Federals raced on. Morgan however began to have some serious misgivings. Off to the north, the enemy "curtain" was in fact a field forti-



fication that now dominated his right flank. And ahead, to the collective surprise of the Unionists, the timber shielded a twenty-foot-deep cut in the railroad, which forced Morgan's three regiments to grind to a halt.

The Confederates manning this portion of the line were what was left of Pat Cleburne's ravaged division. Having survived the inferno at Franklin, they had been monitoring the Yankee advance for some time, and they recognized with a certain amount of glee that the bluecoats were walking into a trap, especially since the front line troops were black. "Little did they dream," wrote one Georgian, "that every step they took... was watched by angry eyes and twitching fingers." The Texans of Granbury's brigade were supporting the artillery in the lunette staring down Morgan's flank, while farther south Govan's and Lowrey's brigades reversed their lines and put the enemy in their rifle sights. And as Morgan's men approached the cut, the Georgians of Jackson's brigade from Bate's division left their defenses and formed just south of the railroad. At once, the Confederates opened fire and blanketed Morgan's stunned men with a deluge of riflery and cannonade. "When we commenced firing on them," wrote a participant, "complete demoralization followed." Some of the blacks leapt into the cut. Those who survived the fall were quickly shot down. Others tumbled into a nearby pond, which soon became a killing zone. Most fought valiantly against the overwhelming odds with a determination that impressed their white cohorts, but it was to little avail. As one Southerner recalled, "We did not give them any quarter."<sup>36</sup>

With the Confederates concentrating their efforts against Morgan, Charles Grosvenor was able to push two of his regiments straight at the point of the lunette with little loss. But as Morgan's people began to fall back, the Texans turned their guns on this new threat. On the Federal right, the 18th Ohio tumbled into the ditch fronting the works, but they couldn't force their way across the palisade, and settled into a slugging match with the Lone Star staters. However, weighted down with conscripts and bounty jumpers, Grosvenor's other unit—the 2nd Battalion, XIV Army Corps—simply broke and ran when the firing started, leaving their brigademates to fend for themselves. After a few brutal

minutes isolated in close combat, the 18th Ohio fell back from the killing ground.

Steedman's third brigade in the assault—Colonel Charles Thompson's four USCT regiments—had crossed the railroad north of the lunette and spread out between the tracks and the Nolensville Pike, where they exchanged long-range fire with the Confederates but managed to accomplish little else. And so it was. By noon Steedman's attempt to flank the rebels out of their works had resulted in a bloody and decisive defeat, and after their hard knocks his men were content to find some convenient cover and snipe at the rebs. Steedman would later claim that he had severely pressured the enemy flank, but one Southerner recalled that in the wake of the Yankee attacks he and his comrades sank into a state of "philosophical indifference," a condition rarely associated with battle stress. In fact, Steedman had been about as ineffective as Richard Johnson out on the opposite flank. Neither had brought their numbers

to bear, and neither would end up influencing the battle.<sup>37</sup>

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At 10:00 a.m., about the time Morgan launched his ill-fated assault, Thomas ordered most of the artillery in the Nashville defenses to open fire. Led by the heavy metal at Fort Negley, the Federal cannon exploded in an ear-shattering din, a spewing of shell and smoke that shook the ground. Much of the ordnance was aimed at the Confederate defenses on Montgomery Hill. But the display of Federal firepower did little to calm the nerves of one witness. As the pivot of the wheel, Thomas Wood could do little but sit and wait for A.J. Smith's corps to complete its turning movement before he could initiate his IV Corps' advance. The morning hours dragged on until, about a half hour past noon, the left flank of Smith's command started forward. Wood ordered his entire three-division line to

Below: View of the outer line of Union defenses from Fort Negley (located directly behind the photographer) across the Franklin Pike to the Blockhouse Casino.

Right: A modern-day photo of the same ground.



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the attack, a sight he recalled as “magnificently grand and imposing.” Little resistance was encountered, and as his people neared the rebel defenses on Montgomery Hill, Wood ordered Colonel Sydney Post’s brigade from Sam Beatty’s division to encircle the enemy’s right and attack from that angle. As Post pushed his men down the Granny White Pike, an officer mentioned to Wood that victory appeared certain. Wood replied, “Certainly, Colonel; we shall whip them, and do it easily.”<sup>38</sup>

As Colonel Abel Streight positioned his brigade on Post’s left, the Unionists began their sweep up the hill. The two commands seemed to be racing to see who could make the summit first. Ahead of the attackers lay an imposing set of defenses, “several rows of palisades, a wide ditch and the earthworks about eight feet high.” But to their near shock, the Northerners found that the enemy defenses lacked a crucial ingredient: defenders. Only a few rebel skirmishers banged away at the wave of bluecoats before turning tail and scurrying south. Post and Streight found themselves in control of a position the Confederates had abandoned five days before. As one wag put it, “It was like striking a hard blow at some object when no object was there.”<sup>39</sup>

firepower, the success of this day’s attack had somehow devolved onto the “rough-looking set” that was “Smith’s Guerillas.”

\* \* \*

For John Hood, the day could not have gone better. Word came from the right flank that Cleburne’s men had smashed an enemy foray. Yankee efforts opposite Stephen D. Lee’s corps appeared to be almost improbably slow. It was only when he toured A.P. Stewart’s line that he grew somewhat concerned. Well to the north and west snaked a long line of Federals, and bluecoated skirmishers were already poking at his redoubts. With enemy intentions centered on Stewart’s flank, Hood called upon Lee to supply some supports. But the commander had to enjoy some satisfaction at the day’s events. He had concentrated much of his tactical thinking in the layout and construction of the redoubts protecting his left, and the Yankees unwittingly were about to test his concepts. It was playing out exactly as Hood had hoped; “It seemed to be,” in the words of historian Wiley Sword, “the Battle of Franklin in reverse.”<sup>40</sup>

Looking closer at his dispositions, it is difficult to imagine how John Hood could have held any hope for success.

Redoubt Five stood a bit west of the Hillsboro Pike, over three hundred yards south of the terminus of Stewart’s flank on the pike. West of that terminus was Redoubt Four. The remaining three outworks buffered the angle where Stewart’s line cut to the east, with Redoubt Three west of the pike, One and Two just east of the roadway. Obviously, Four and Five were almost insanely isolated, with each manned by a gun crew

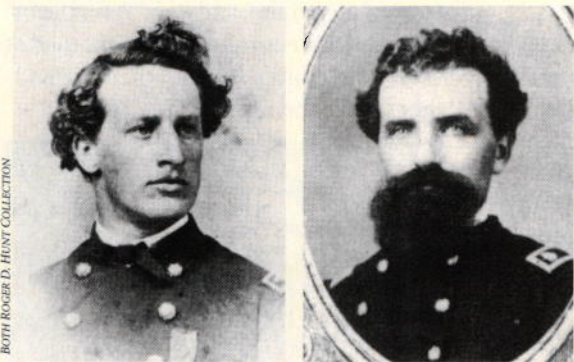
and about one hundred infantry supports. Although Hood would later argue that the works were incomplete, an officer at Four thought the work “in fairly good condition” with four embrasures cut into the eight-foot-high walls and infantry trenches extending both flanks. But that same officer calculated the number of defenders at less than one hundred and fifty. How such small commands were supposed to resist the enemy storm that was brewing to the west was anybody’s guess.<sup>41</sup>

\* \* \*

Smith’s infantrymen were Midwesterners all, and they had spent much of the war fighting at places named Chickasaw Bluffs, Vicksburg, and Red River. Their leader was an army lifer, twenty-three years a dragoon out on the western frontier. They had been in St. Louis, Missouri, when they got the call to board a flotilla of transports and come to Nashville. On the other hand, the commanding cavalry officer was all of twenty-seven, and his horsemen had been dueling with their Confederate counterparts for nearly a month. The foot soldiers marched in a two-division front with a third division in close support. The two divisions of cavalry—some mounted but most on foot—were out on the right flank, double-timing in an effort to keep pace with the infantry’s shorter route. They had all spent the morning and early afternoon rolling across a moonscape of standing water and mud, bare ridges, and smashed tree stumps. They were about to apply the lash.

\* \* \*

George Thomas received a striking piece of intelligence sometime that morning that the Confederate left was extended farther south than originally thought. The commander immediately ordered Schofield to form his corps on Smith’s right to allow Wilson to cut the Hillsboro Pike and puncture the rebel rear. Smith’s men slowed their advance to allow Schofield to deploy, but Wilson’s troopers maintained their pace. Already the horsemen were celebrating the first Federal success of the day. As the Fifth Division’s commander, Brigadier General Edward Hatch, approached the Belle Meade mansion on the Harding Pike, James Chalmers’ trains were sighted rolling south on the Hillsboro Pike. Colonel Datus Coon sent the 12th Tennessee (US) Cavalry from his Second Brigade in pursuit, and in no time the Federals captured some twenty-three wagons and a half a company of prisoners. Hatch then pressed his two brigades to the east. Sometime after noon, as the dismounted troopers crested yet another in a series of ridges, they discovered a rebel outwork crowning a hilltop not a half mile to their left-front. It was Redoubt Four. Sensing an opportunity, Hatch and Coon positioned Battery I of the 1st Illinois Light Artillery to take the fortification in flank



Colonel Charles R. Thompson (left) of the 2nd Colored Brigade, Charles Cruft’s division; (right) Colonel Datus E. Coon, Second Brigade, Edward Hatch’s division.

For George Thomas, this latest turn was simply more of the same. It was past 2:00 p.m., and the litany of Federal failures was almost cruel. Out on both flanks, Johnson and Steedman had accomplished nothing. Wood reported that he had captured an unmanned rebel bastion and was still almost a mile from the main enemy works. Now all eyes turned to A.J. Smith. Little had been heard of his advance, but with most of the Federal commands bogged down by either bad intelligence, a hamstringing inertia, or rebel



and began deploying the Second Brigade for the attack. On command, the Illini artillery opened the ball.

Farther north, Smith's men were again on the move, and striding into view of the rebel redoubt were the First and Second Brigades of Brigadier General John McArthur's division. They were Smith's rightmost command, with Colonel William McMillen's First Brigade angling in from the northwest and Colonel Lucius Hubbard rolling down from the north. Hubbard quickly deployed the 2nd Battery Iowa Light Artillery. Soon the Iowans were plastering the rebel right flank, even as the infantry shook out a frowning battle line.

After a morning of frustration, George Thomas' plans finally began to gel.

\* \* \*

The small band of Confederates in Redoubt Four were already questioning the wisdom of their position. Earlier, Ector's brigade had streamed past the position on the way to the rear, warning their comrades that "there is a whole army in your front." As the infantry scampered away, the battery's commander, Captain Charles Lumsden, turned to see the next ridge west turn blue with Hatch's Yankees. Lumsden steeled his Alabamans with brave words, but as his men rushed to their posts, the first shots from the enemy artillery slammed into the earthworks. Lumsden's men replied as best they could, but the captain sent word to A.P. Stewart that the Federals were about to launch a charge that he would have little chance of resisting.<sup>42</sup>

Two more Federal batteries joined the fray, forcing Lumsden to run two of his guns out of the redoubt to counter their fire. The exchanges went on for nearly an hour, wreathing the hilltop in smoke and pummeling the rebel works, before Edward Hatch decided enough was enough. Orders circulated to prepare for an attack. Bugles then rent the air and Coon's men leapt forward. To the north, McMillan saw the same opportunity and ordered his brigade to the assault. Lumsden screamed, "Look out, men! Give them canister," but the shotgun-like charges flew harmlessly over the Unionists' heads. In no time, the Federal tide—Coon's men from the south, McMillan's boys from the north—swept over Redoubt Four and concussed the defenders. Lumsden's last command rose over the

maelstrom: "Take care of yourselves, boys." The redoubt's survivors raced down the hill and scrambled for the Hillsboro Pike and the relatively safe haven of Stewart's line.<sup>43</sup>

Captain Edward Tarrant watched in horror from Redoubt Five as his comrades melted before the overwhelming Federal attack. Bravely he ordered his two howitzers loaded and sent their charges slamming into the milling Yankees at Redoubt Four. Northern heads snapped south to locate this new threat, and one perceptive Illini officer pointed at the offenders and shouted, "That's the one we want now, boys!" The Federal mob barely paused before they tumbled down the hill and ran screaming at Tarrant's little band in Redoubt Five. Seeing the attack commence, McArthur aggressively ordered his Second Brigade forward, even as the Federal artillery redirected their pieces to pound the isolated work with a series of salvos. Under these arching shells, literally thousands of Northerners shook off their exhaustion and swept across the barren landscape. It took incredible bravery for Tarrant's people to stand their ground, but after a parting explosion of canister, Redoubt Five disappeared under the Federal tide, the stunned defenders fleeing east, the exultant Yankees roaring in pursuit.<sup>44</sup>

McArthur's Third Brigade had formed north of its comrades and watched impatiently as McMillen's and Hubbard's troops crushed the enemy redoubts. But now Federal attention was drawn to Redoubt Three, the source of the nearest rebel cannonade. The bluecoated artillerists found the range daunting, but elevated their guns for maximum trajectory and began hammering the fort. A.J. Smith trotted up and peered at the Confederate position, and McArthur's Third Brigade commander, Colonel Sylvester G. Hill, announced that his regiments could easily take the position. Smith, however, wanted to bring more power to the attack. He told Hill to wait and rode south looking for Hubbard's brigade.

As Smith departed, Hill nevertheless turned to a nearby bugler and told him to "sound the charge." Hill's screaming men lurched forward, two regiments in front, two in

support. Halfway to Redoubt Three, under "fierce" fire, the Federals heard the bugles to the south; elements of Hubbard's brigade were joining the attack. The two Union wings stormed across the final few hundred feet as most of the Confederate fire passed over their heads. In a final heave, Hill's Iowans, Minnesotans, and Missourians crested the earthwork and crushed the defenders with a wave of rifle fire.<sup>45</sup>

A passel of Southerners abandoned the redoubt before the Federal attack hit home, but a fair number stayed to the end. As vicious fights erupted among the guns, shellfire suddenly exploded inside the fort. Despite the presence of a number of gritty Southerners, the Confederate artillerists just across the Hillsboro Pike in Redoubt Two were cutting their fuses short and blasting at the van of the Yankee attack. Sylvester Hill recognized the danger of the position and bellowed out for his boys to continue the charge. The words barely out of his mouth, a minié ball crushed his forehead and killed him, but his entire brigade seemed instinctively to understand what the moment demanded. Major David Reed of the 12th Iowa and Colonel William Marshall of the 7th Minnesota called their boys forward. The Northerners swarmed across the intervening ground, and once again the inexorable blue wave engulfed another of Hood's redoubts. The Southern defenders ran for their lives.



Brigadier General John McArthur (above) and Colonel Sylvester G. Hill, who commanded the Third Brigade in McArthur's division.

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Major General Edward Walthall watched as Redoubts Four and Five disappeared under the massive enemy attacks. His and Brigadier General Claudius Sears' divisions were now all that remained of A.P. Stewart's refused left flank, and Walthall's men were stretched to near breaking point trying to cover their assigned front. Most of his people hugged a stone wall just east of the Hillsboro Pike, but they got a bit of good news when Manigault's and Deas' brigades arrived from Lee's corps to bolster their left flank. However, the scene to the west was heart-stopping, as one South Carolinian thought, "The whole face of creation seemed to be covered with bluecoats." He was barely exaggerating. Schofield's corps had arrived on the scene and was forming south of Redoubt Five, while elements of the Federal assault on Redoubt Five were now angling

straight toward the Southerners. Suddenly a deafening wave of Federal artillery blanketed the crouching Confederates, and in a sight rarely seen, Deas' and Manigault's men broke for the rear. The adjoining field provided no shelter, and as Yankee metal swept the soggy ground, the grayclad mob reversed themselves and raced back to the stone wall. There the advancing Federal infantry was spraying the front with rifle fire, and Edward Hatch's First Cavalry Brigade with Colonel Robert Stewart at the head had crossed the Pike well to the south and was boldly advancing on Manigault's left. Suddenly it was over. The Confederate left fractured, large numbers bolting for the rear and equally large numbers surrendering. A.P. Stewart tried to quell the panic by deploying an artillery section, but its fire merely provided the Yankees a new target. Schofield's Second Division under Major General Darius Couch

melded with Robert Stewart's troopers; together they overran the doomed artillerists and their few infantry supports.<sup>46</sup>

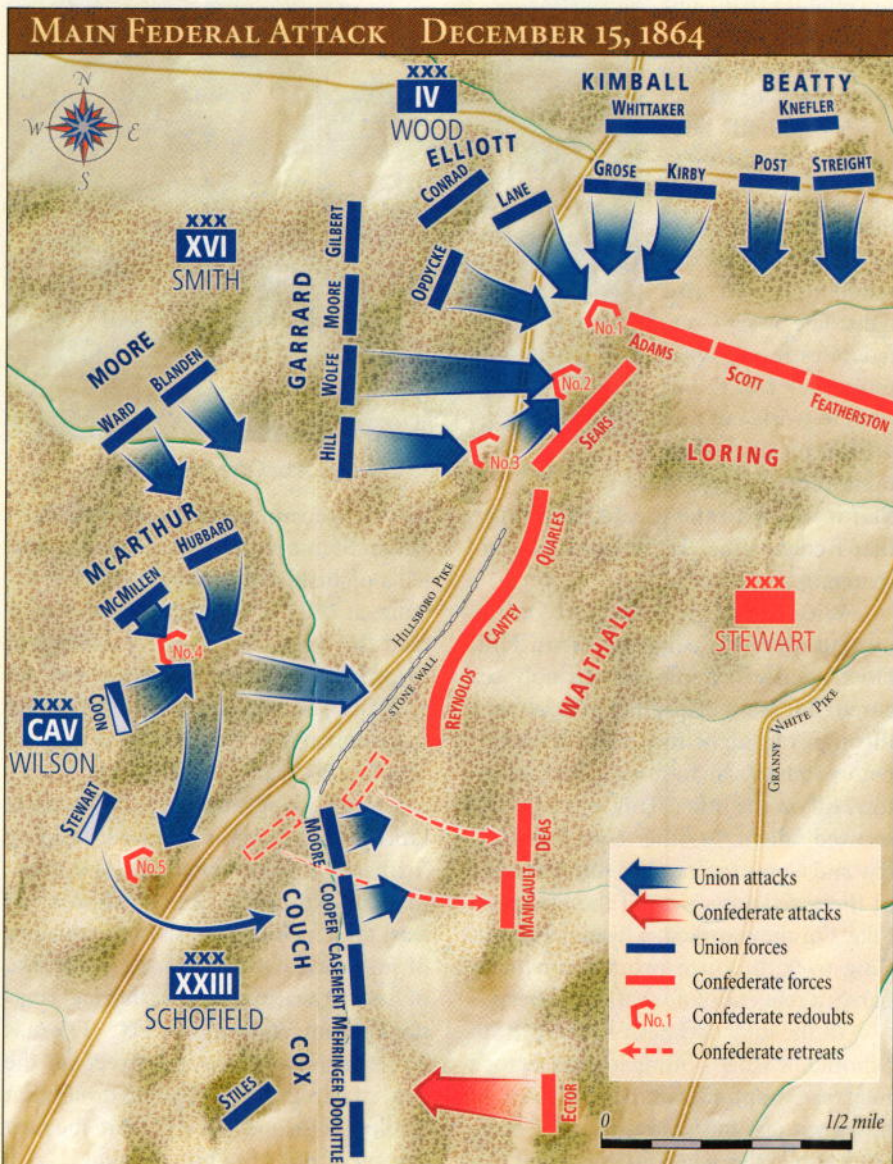
Walthall's division was next. The general had tried to staunch the retreat by redeploying Brigadier General Daniel Reynolds' brigade to the south, but with treacherous gaps on both flanks soon filling with attacking Unionists, Walthall's people began to give way. Some conducted a gallant retreat, but the enemy pressure was massive. "It soon became a run," Reynolds would remember, "& all commands became mixed up & in confusion & many men throwing away their guns." Edward Walthall's division disintegrated.<sup>47</sup>

A.P. Stewart knew the time had come. He sent word to his commanders to abandon the line, and ordered William Loring to take up a position along the Granny White Pike as a rallying point. The corps commander was then working his way east when two more brigades from Lee's corps trudged up. Stewart glumly ordered them to retreat, as reports indicated the Unionists were a half-mile in their rear. His position, the general would recall, was "perilous in the extreme."<sup>48</sup>

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After the debacle at Montgomery Hill, Thomas Wood pushed his corps south toward the frowning hills topped by the rebel lines. His Second Division, led by Brigadier General Washington Elliott, marched west of the Hillsboro Pike, while his First and Third Divisions—commanded by Brigadier Generals Nathan Kimball and Sam Beatty—maneuvered east of the roadway. The sight of these nine brigades on the move was fearfully awesome, especially for the Confederate defenders of Redoubt One. Perched on an eminence nearly seventy feet above the Pike, the Southerners had a clear view of the enemy advance. There was also little doubt that huge numbers of Federals were somewhere to their left-rear. But when Wood's artillery opened, the redoubt's overmatched defenders gamely replied.

It was near 4:00 p.m., with perhaps a half-hour of daylight left. Wood ordered Elliott to attack Redoubt One, but Elliott twice demurred, claiming the need to wait for A.J. Smith to arrive. Instead, the aggressive Kimball requested and re-





ceived the honor to lead the attack. With Brigadier General William Grose's Third Brigade on the right and Colonel Isaac Kirby's First Brigade on the left, Kimball's people noisily jumped off, heading straight south toward the heights. Suddenly, Elliott's front two brigades—Colonel Emerson Opdycke's "Tigers" on the right and Colonel John Lane's Second Brigade on the left—got caught up in the excitement and joined the attack, sweeping across the Hillsboro Pike and angling at the redoubt from the northwest. Like a violent torrent, the blue lines surged up the hill.

Perhaps the heaviest fighting at Redoubt One occurred after the war, as at least four different Federal commands claimed its capture. Skirmishers from the 36th Illinois described vaulting the earthen wall and forcing the rebels' surrender. Emerson Opdycke wrote that his people overran the position in a welter of hand-to-hand fighting and turned the artillery on the retreating graybacks. Units from Kirby's brigade argued that their flags were the first on the fort's walls. Amazingly, even Sylvester Hill's men from Smith's XIV Corps contended that the momentum of their assault on Redoubt Two carried them on to Redoubt One. Perhaps one of the claims is true, perhaps they all are. What seems sure is that a converging mass of Federal infantry crushed what remained of Hood's defenses and sent the remainder of Stewart's corps into a frantic retreat.

Major General William Loring's division was facing north on a line east of Redoubt One when the Federals came sweeping down the left flank. In turn Adams, Scott, and Featherston's Brigades cracked under the pressure and started for the rear. Loring managed to fulfill Stewart's orders, forming at least part of his command south along the Granny White Pike, but others weren't so fortunate. Brigadier General Claudius Sears got caught up in the melee. As his brigade disappeared to the south and east, Sears took a cannonball to the leg, which also killed his horse. The wound would necessitate amputation, but the general seemed entirely more upset with the loss of his beloved horse. Still, there were moments of determined bravery. The 23rd Mississippi fought a gallant delaying action, resisting the Federal advance until their ammunition was exhausted. But there was little fight left in most of

Stewart's Corps. Across the muddy fields and down the crowded Granny White Pike the Confederates trudged, the battle lost, the day a disaster. Wrote one officer, "The men seemed utterly lethargic and without interest in the battle. I never witnessed such want of enthusiasm and began to fear for tomorrow."<sup>49</sup>

John Bell Hood tried to organize a new defensive posture, but with half his army crushed and his options severely limited, he had to take what little the situation offered. He placed Ector's fairly fresh brigade on a solid eminence called Compton Hill, almost two miles south of Redoubt One and some fifteen hundred feet west of the Granny White Pike. From this anchor he spread out the survivors of the day's defeat. Cheatham's corps had done little fighting, so Hood deployed them around Compton Hill as his army's new left flank. He placed the remnants of Stewart's corps to Cheatham's right, and brought Stephen D. Lee's corps directly south, forming his divisions on both sides of the Franklin Pike. The survivors were then told to dig in, as Hood had already decided to stand and fight. The weary Confederates found what tools they could and went to work, but one officer recalled, "My men were so fatigued that it was with the greatest difficulty that I could urge on the work of constructing breastworks."<sup>50</sup>

With Lee's right ensconced on the one-hundred-foot-high Overton Hill, Hood's eastern flank was strongly secured. But as his exhausted men labored through the night to perfect their defenses, some began to suspect that Compton Hill on the other flank was a poorly secured salient. Another assault like today and Compton's would suffer the fate of those redoubts west of the Hillsboro Pike. On they worked, a dismal pall settling over the once-proud army, now barely a reflection of what it had been.

In the inky darkness, Federals from Schofield's Corps bumped into Ector's men on Compton's Hill. A small firefight broke out, and the Unionists pulled back. Ector's men thought it an important vic-

tory, but it amounted to little. The fight of December 15 was over.

\* \* \*

That night, Thomas Eckert nervously sat in his telegraph office at the War Department and awaited news from Nashville. Of his own initiative he had delayed sending word of Thomas' dismissal, in hopes that news of a battle would render the order moot. The lines had been down, and Thomas' December 14 assurance that an attack would commence on the morrow had arrived around 10:00 p.m., but for an hour that was the only news the major received. Finally, at 11:00 p.m., a description of the day's actions swept across the wire, with an early tally of 1,500 prisoners and seventeen guns. But Eckert needed to read little more than the line, "The whole action of today was splendidly successful."



Modern-day view of Redoubt One, facing west.

Eckert raced out into the night to inform Edwin Stanton, then the pair rushed to tell a nightshirted Abraham Lincoln. Finally, at Willard's Hotel, Ulysses Grant read the report and quickly replied to Thomas, congratulating him on the splendid success. Grant then informed his people at City Point that he would not be going to Nashville after all.<sup>51</sup>

Soon, congratulatory notes from Lincoln and Stanton followed, heaping further praise upon their steadfast commander. No doubt George Thomas, at least for a moment, relished the wisdom of following his own course in the face of the overbearing pressure that had emanated from Washington D.C. Thomas had again been proven correct on the field of battle. And he had no doubt that if John Bell Hood was still there the next day, he would whip him again.



\* \* \*

The next morning, December 16, 1864, in a light, almost spring-like mist, Thomas' victorious columns trod south. They moved like snakes across the landscape, inching toward the rebel earthworks crowning another set of hills. A.J. Smith's men arrived north of Compton Hill about midmorning and immediately dug in, circling the rebel hilltop salient with artillery. Smith now commanded only two brigades, and thus awaited Schofield's advance to begin his own assault. However, for all his bluster and egoism, that morning John Schofield was proving to be a lackluster fighter. Even with Wilson's troopers operating on his right flank, Schofield found his position directly west of Compton Hill hugely troubling. He had demanded and received a brigade from Smith, but he still feared that a phantom rebel force was about to attack his right flank. For almost the entire day, Schofield would remain inert, ordering his men to build entrenchments, convinced that his minor firefight with Ector's men the night before presaged disaster for him and his corps.



Citizens watch the battle from a hilltop.

Wilson was doing little to help the situation. A dismounted reconnaissance to the Granny White Pike netted prisoners from Cheatham's corps, and Federal scouts ran into some of Chalmers' troopers south along the Hillsboro Pike. Somehow, these two bits of intelligence convinced Wilson and Schofield that Hood was engineering a turning movement, and both men adopted a timid "wait-and-see" attitude. As the morning passed with nothing but inaction, a frustrated George Thomas found Wilson about 10:30 a.m. on the Hillsboro Pike and curtly told him to cut the Granny White

Pike. After making the odd suggestion to Thomas that he might be of better use on the army's eastern flank, Wilson rode off to ready his idle troopers. According to Thomas' wishes, when Wilson cut the Pike, the infantry assault would begin. Suddenly, the responsibility for the triggering of the day's battle rested on Wilson's shoulders, and the young officer shook off the morning's timidity with an energy befitting a cavalryman.

\* \* \*

As Thomas Wood slowly pushed his IV Corps down the Franklin Pike, a spattering of rain turned into a wind-swept, dreary downpour. Wood's sodden command found the Confederate line anchored on Overton Hill sometime before noon, and an ill-advised thrust by Conrad's and Lane's brigades did nothing but add to the Federal casualty rolls. Steedman arrived soon thereafter, connecting with Wood's left around 12:30 p.m. George Thomas found Wood near the Franklin Pike about this time and told him to press the Confederates with infantry probes and artillery barrages, reminding him at one point to keep an eye peeled "for any opening for a more decisive result." Thomas then left, and as the temperature continued its wind-driven decline, Wood and Steedman devised a plan to assault the rebel works. Two brigades from Beaty's division would attack Overton's north face, while

Steedman's people would lend support on the left. Soon, Federals muscled their considerable artillery into line and began to pummel the rebel works. Behind them, grim Unionists prepared to assault Stephen D. Lee's ominous line of earthworks.<sup>52</sup>

As it matured, the attack plan was fairly simple: after the artillery bombardment, Colonel Sydney Post was to throw his brigade at the northern slope of Overton, with Colonel Abel Streight's brigade in close support. Steedman meanwhile would advance his people on Post's left, with Colonel Charles Thomp-

son's brigade in front, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Grosvenor's brigade in support, and Colonel Thomas Morgan's brigade in reserve. Officers and soldiers alike knew the work would be desperate. They shuffled to their positions as the Federal artillery hammered the Confederates, sending blasted earthworks and splintered headlogs flying in every direction. Finally, around 3:00 p.m., with their artillery shells still arching over their heads, the Unionists moved out.

\* \* \*

Stephen D. Lee had truly found himself good ground, and it was the great fortune of Major General Henry Clayton's division to be assigned the defense of this sector. Rising just east of the Franklin Pike, Overton Hill was in fact twin heights, its northern peak some sixty feet above the Pike and its southern rise nearly forty feet higher. Brigadier General James Holtzclaw's brigade of Alabamans held the northern slope, facing north with some of his men extending west across the Pike. There they connected with Brigadier General Randall Gibson's Louisianans, who formed behind a sturdy stone wall. To Gibson's left was Brigadier General Edmund Pettus' Alabamans from Major General Carter Stevenson's division. Running south from Holtzclaw's right flank along the eastern face of Overton's second peak were Brigadier General Marcellus Stovall's Georgians. Protecting Stovall's right was Brigadier General William Brantley's Mississippi brigade and Colonel Jacob Biffle's 10th Tennessee Cavalry. They had spent the morning exhaustedly at work, and by the time the Yankees rolled into view the Confederates had a line of well-constructed, well-placed earthworks crowning the heights.<sup>53</sup>

For well over an hour Lee's people dodged the nearly continuous bombardment. Then, in martial splendor, flags snapping in the wind, came the long lines of the Federal assault. As the bluecoats swung into view, the Confederates on Overton made a maddening discovery. "The first three lines were negroes," recalled one irate Georgian of Steedman's front line. In fact it was the 12th and 100th USCT, with the 13th USCT close behind. Already the Confederate artillery began ripping bloody gaps out of the Federal front, even as Sidney Post's people with the 41st Ohio in the lead roared to-



ward Overton's northern incline. Then Holtzclaw's and Stovall's infantry swept the sector with musketry, prompting one Alabaman to write, "They fell like wheat before a mowing machine."<sup>54</sup>

The brutal fire shredded Steedman's regiments. The 12th USCT lost cohesion soon after it maneuvered around a thicket at double-time, triggering the 100th USCT to pick up the attack despite Thompson's desire to halt before delivering the blow. Both units angled dangerously toward Post's advancing lines, then careened to their left, presenting their flank to Stovall's rifles and blocking the advance of Grosvenor's brigade. Tumbling away from the blazing rebel line, Thompson's troops joined Grosvenor's people seeking out what shelter they could at the base of the hill, and opened a fire on their tormentors.

Meanwhile, on Overton's northern face, Post's 41st Ohio found its path blocked by an impenetrable abatis not thirty yards from the rebs. Post tried to rally his troops, but a shell fragment ripped into him, sending the aggressive officer out of the fight. His boys went to ground before the obstructions, where they were quickly joined by Streight's onrushing people, even as Holtzclaw's men shivered their ranks. Suddenly, musketry plastered their exposed right flank. It was Gibson's brigade who had turned its sights east after throwing back an advance by Wood's Second Division west of the Franklin Pike. Some of Stovall's men were also able to blast at Post's and Streight's supine regiments, circling the bluecoats in a ring of fire. In barely the time to tell it, Wood and Steedman's bid to crack Lee's line had ground down in a welter of blood.

Then, seemingly on cue, the 13th USCT burst out of the gloom and charged to glory. It had advanced unsupported between Overton's twin peaks and headed straight at an artillery unit protecting the hinge between Holtzclaw and Stovall. At that moment, the 13th was the only Northern regiment taking up the charge, and the entire Confederate line redirected its fire at the former slaves. As the blacks stormed up the sodden hillside, a perfect storm of riflery and cannon fire blanketed their front. Cheering wildly, they braved the iron wave and pushed through the abatis, lapping up to the earthworks and fighting with a fury seldom seen. A stunned Ohioan recalled,

"I never saw more heroic conduct shown on the field of battle than was exhibited by this body of men so recently slaves." Even James Holtzclaw was moved to write, "They gallantly dashed up to the abatis, forty feet in front, and were killed by hundreds.... [T]hey continued to come up in masses to the abatis, but they came only to die." Bravery alone, however, could not stand such concentrated fire. An Ohioan from Streight's brigade caught the moment when he wrote, "Soon all the troops were in hasty and disorderly retreat."<sup>55</sup>



Fort Negley in 1864.

Holtzclaw would later write, "I have seen most of the battlefields of the West, but never saw dead men thicker than in front of my two right regiments." One of his Alabamans seemed to agree: "The ground was covered with dead negroes, and in other places they lay in heaps." Despite the gallantry, the attack was a bitter failure. Federal artillery resumed its bombardment as Thomas Wood and James Steedman surveyed the wreck of their plans. For the Federal soldiers, a disquieting calm descended over their lines. "A heavy rain was falling," one recalled, "and with our oilcloths wrapped about our shoulders we sat in our trenches, waiting and watching."<sup>56</sup>

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It had been, as they say, a long morning and an even longer afternoon for the defenders of Compton Hill. The three brigades of William Bate's division held the salient-like crest: Finley's Florida bri-

gade under Major Glover Ball in the center, Brigadier Henry Jackson's Georgians on the right, and Tyler's brigade commanded by Brigadier General Thomas Benton Smith on the left. Walthall's ravaged division from Stewart's corps ran directly east off of Bate's right, while Brown's division under Brigadier General Mark Lowrey deployed south of Compton's from Bate's left. Cleburne's division spread out facing south off Lowrey's left flank, thus refusing Cheatham's flank in anticipation of Yankee thrusts in that area. Ector's brigade,

which had held the hill since the evening before, was pulled out of the line to act as the divisional reserve, even though the brigade was nominally still under A.P. Stewart's command.

Cheatham's men had spent the early morning struggling to build earthworks, but the results were hardly satisfying. Only a bare defensive line gouged the hill, badly located on the physical rather than the military crest. So when A.J. Smith's bluecoated artillery opened at mid-morning, there was little protection to shield the suddenly vulnerable Confederates. Even worse, as more Federals arrived, they were able to locate their artillery with impunity, in essence surrounding the hill on three sides. It was, as one Southerner recalled, "almost a miracle that anyone escaped." The Yankee fire literally destroyed a sixty yard segment of the earthworks, and Federal sharpshooters made any attempt to repair the damage deadly. With few Con-



federate guns able to counter the Northern barrage, the crisscrossing Yankee shells turned the top of Compton's Hill into a true artillery hell. One officer recalled, "All the fiends in pandemonium could not have created a more incessant, devilish noise. Shells and canister were everywhere." Wrote the shell-shocked survivor of the bombardment, "[They] seemed ready to blow us out of creation." And just when it seemed things couldn't get worse, things got worse.<sup>57</sup>



Brigadier General James Holtzclaw (left) and Brigadier General Mark Lowrey.

Despite John Schofield's turgidity, James Wilson inexorably pushed his troopers toward the Granny White Pike, and the resultant pressure, combined with the Federal attack on Overton Hill, forced Cheatham and Hood into a series of critical mistakes. It was unnerving on the hilltop, as Wilson's men began to attack the refused Confederate flank; it was painfully obvious that a strong Federal force was assaulting the army's rear. Accordingly, Ector was called south about noon to counter the probes, leaving Bate with no reserve. A few hours later, Hood pulled Granbury's and Lowrey's brigades from Cleburne's division to reinforce Stephen D. Lee, leaving only Govan's brigade to man their sector. Soon thereafter Hood removed Reynolds' brigade from Walthall's line to reinforce the Confederates opposing Wilson. At each depletion the Southerners were forced to extend themselves, their battle line "stretching further and further apart, until it was not more than a skeleton of a skirmish line from one end to the other."<sup>58</sup>

Although the area between Overton and Compton hills did not see the same sort of pressure as the flanks, various Federal sorties accompanied a blanket of artillery fire and sharpshooting that kept casualties mounting on both sides. For most of this sector, the Confederates took advantage of a sturdy stone wall that marked the northern boundary of the Lea

property, and the Federal probes were invariably thrown back. Hood had transferred his headquarters to the Lea home and was heartened by the news along his front. However, he seemed unaware of the growing crisis at Compton's. The troops manning the salient were being pulverized by the incessant Yankee artillery fire, and the lines were being disintegrated to counter the Federal pressure on the flank. Yet Hood pulled two brigades from the hot zone and sent them to Stephen Lee, who proved fairly succinctly that he didn't need reinforcements. Hood also supported the removal of the divisional reserve and the redeployment of Reynolds' brigade, both of which weakened the most critical segment of the sector's defenses. In fact, as the afternoon stretched into twilight, Hood claimed that he was developing plans for a flank attack on Schofield to commence the next day, a fanciful conjecture given Wilson's strong presence in the Confederate rear. It is possible that Hood didn't know that two Federal cavalry divisions had encircled his left flank, but it is difficult to believe an army commander could be so out of touch with the tactical developments along his front, especially since his people had been dueling with Wilson for most of the day. Whatever Hood's thinking at the time, a growling Scotsman prowling the Federal lines north of Compton Hill was about to render all such concoctions moot.

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Brigadier General John McArthur was, simply put, a man of action, and the possibility that December 16 might pass without a concerted attempt to take Compton Hill was driving him to distraction. Unlike many of the onlookers that day, McArthur recognized the hill's weaknesses, and felt his men could overrun the position with a minimum of effort. At one point he tried to get Schofield's Second Division commander, Major General Darius Couch, to join him in an attack, but Couch told him he was on his own. Undaunted, McArthur shook his three brigades out and ordered them to prepare to attack Compton's in echelon from right to left. Almost as an afterthought, he sent a staffer to explain his plans to A.J. Smith, and warned his corps commander that the assault would commence in five minutes unless Smith thought otherwise.

The messenger found Smith and Thomas in consultation, but Thomas told the staffer to delay the attack until he got Schofield started. Thomas then trotted south and found the XXIII Corps commander. The pair almost immediately welcomed James Wilson, who arrived with an intercepted message from Hood to cavalryman Chalmers demanding that Wilson's men be driven back "or all is lost." Even after a direct order from Thomas, Schofield remained characteristically opposed to an attack, but suddenly the trio observed the inclines of Compton Hill covered with bluecoats rolling toward the crest. George Thomas firmly announced, "General Smith is attacking without waiting for you; please advance your entire line." Schofield ordered Jacob Cox forward as James Wilson bolted to rejoin his men.<sup>59</sup>

The final act in the battle for Nashville had begun.

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Ector's brigade had arrived on Hood's pressured left flank just in time. James Chalmers' dismounted troopers had been forced off a crucial hilltop by one of Datus Coon's regiments, but David Coleman led Ector's people across the heights and swept the bluecoats back. Wilson and his Federals, however, were building up a potent strike force. Fifth Cavalry Division commander Edward Hatch encircled the hill with his artillery, and as the heavy metal began to plow into the Southern lines, Coon's entire brigade lay down a rattling fusillade. Chalmers and Coleman recognized the hopelessness of their position; under the battering barrage, they pulled their men back and started down the Granny White Pike. Then, as Wilson's men raced across the abandoned rebel line, all hell seemed to explode not a mile to the north.

It was sometime after 3:00 p.m. In concert, eighteen Federal artillery pieces put down a numbing barrage on Compton's bare crest. As the artillery roared, Colonel William McMillen moved his command some five hundred yards to the right across Couch's front, then urged his three regiments forward. They stormed across the intervening field and hit the side of the hill to begin their sodden ascent. Surprisingly, only the leftmost regiment—the 10th Minnesota—took any concentrated riflery. The remaining Federals were protected by the hill's steep



sides and the natural protection offered by attacking the point of a salient. What little Confederate artillery fire there was flew harmlessly over their heads, but the nature of the terrain badly disordered the battle line. McMillan's men soon resembled an armed mob, but a mob on a mission.

With the First Brigade halfway up the hill, Colonel Lucius Hubbard's Second Brigade joined the fray, charging over a drenched cornfield at Jackson's brigade and Walthall's division manning the line between Compton's and the Granny White Pike. Confederate artillery tore through the Unionists, and riflery lacerated the blue formation, but Hubbard's people determinedly kept on. To the east, Third Brigade commander Colonel William Marshall was not about to let Hubbard go it alone. "Seeing that Colonel Hubbard ought to be supported," Marshall ordered his four regiments forward. Rebel attention seemed focused on Hubbard's men, who had closed with Walthall's people, allowing Marshall's regiments to surprise a large group of skirmishers fronting Loring's division of

A.P. Stewart's ravaged corps east of the Granny White. It was Franklin in reverse, with Marshall's men following the flushed Southern skirmishers so closely that Loring's infantry lining the stone wall couldn't deliver fire without hitting their own. With "a wild shout," the Federals swept over the wall and crushed Loring's division, joining Hubbard's exultant bluecoats in the fractured enemy lines. The dominoes had begun to fall.<sup>60</sup>

Up on Compton's, the Southerners of Bate's division knew the moment of crisis was at hand. Benton Smith's A.D.C. had seen McMillan's men disappear under the hill's crest, so he worked his way in front of the works trying to observe the enemy's movements. "I sheltered myself as well as possible," he later recalled grimly, "and prayed for night." But night would be an eternity away. McMillan's boys boiled toward the hill's peak then stormed over the crest, the two sides suddenly separated by bare yards of Tennessee dirt. Smith's Confederates unloosed a volley that sailed harmlessly above the startled Yanks. Then, with a mighty roar, the bluecoats flooded over

the battered rebs, crushing their resistance in a vicious whirlwind. There was no time to reload, but the Confederates responded as best they could, throwing "axes, shovels, and muskets at us." Brutal hand-to-hand encounters laced the sector, but when Finley's Floridians saw Smith's men being inundated, they reportedly threw down their guns and ran. Suddenly the rupture exploded. Already pressured in front by Hubbard's attack, Jackson's brigade and Walthall's division disappeared in the melee. Bate ordered Smith to get his people out of there, but the concussion of the Federal breakthrough allowed little time for the intricacies of command. Before the Union sledgehammer, Bate and his division ran for their lives down the southern slopes of Compton Hill.<sup>61</sup>

The fate of three Southern officers holds particular interest. Cornered in the maelstrom, Lieutenant Colonel William Shy of Smith's consolidated Tennessee regiments refused to surrender. Fighting like a man possessed, he perished when a Yankee minié bore into his skull at point blank range. Perhaps from that moment

## Nashville Preservation

Seventeen years ago I read a short article by John Hennessy in *Blue & Gray Magazine*. It was a heart-felt call-to-arms for those of us interested in the Civil War to rally to the cause of battlefield preservation. John's plea, triggered by the destruction of the Chantilly battlefield, centered around the associated threat to Manassas by runaway development and the near amorality of the developers. Thanks to John and the late, great Annie Snyder, Manassas was spared the developer's spade, and the modern battlefield preservation movement began.

As I was researching the Battle of Nashville, I was reminded in a rather interesting way of John's and Annie's efforts. Paging through the always fascinating back issues of *Confederate Veteran*, I came upon an announcement of the formation of the Nashville Battlefield Association and its plans to commemorate the hallowed ground south of the city. From what I gathered, most if not all of the battlefield was untouched, the extensive earthworks and redoubts standing as silent witnesses to those two days of fighting. Even in its infancy, the Association admitted that there was no reason—and probably no money—to try to preserve everything. Instead, the new group recommended that the areas that saw the greatest fighting be protected, with tablets and maps explaining the action. At one point, they even thought roadways could be built to connect the various holdings.

One need only visit Nashville today to see that the Association's considerable plans never gained their needed traction. Although some of them lasted into the twentieth century, most of the Federal works are now gone. Many of the buildings that survived the holocaust still stand, but the miles of trenches and earthworks that John Bell Hood's brave men muscled out of the Tennessee dirt have all but disappeared. In their place are roadway signs on busy intersections, improbably located so that pausing even for a moment to read them risks blaring car horns and menacing looks. In the last decade, Interstate 440 was

constructed at the base of the hills upon which the Confederates built their main line of works. Indeed, it seemed that progress went out of its way to destroy the remnants of the Nashville battlefield, leaving the tramper little in the way of historical interest to see. For people who wanted their battlegrounds pristine, their viewsheds unencumbered by modern intrusions, Nashville had little to offer.

It took a long time, but recently I've come to a different conclusion about such things. Perhaps it's simply the passage of time mellowing my hard-line preservationist tendencies, but for some strange reason the Nashville battlefield seemingly has risen like a phoenix out of the ashes of progress. No, the viewsheds are still cluttered and the battlefield can be hard to find. But it's there. You can walk around downtown



The Lealand stone wall, which anchored the center of the Confederate line on December 16.



on, Compton Hill became Shy's Hill, the bloody heights where a brave Tennessean came to die. Just to the east, Henry Jackson found himself surrounded by members of the 5th Minnesota, one of whom joyously celebrated the moment by exclaiming, "Captured a general, by God. I'll carry you to Nashville myself." Nearby another Confederate officer wasn't so lucky. Thomas Benton Smith was captured and marched off to the rear, along with hundreds of rebel prisoners. Somehow Smith got into an argument with a Federal officer, who proceeded to strike Smith down with a sword and violently crease his skull with a series of blows. The resulting brain damage eventually landed Smith in a hospital for the mentally ill, where he would live a victim of the war until 1923.<sup>62</sup>

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Pandemonium and its attendant panic swept through Cheatham's corps south of Compton's, as the Stars and Stripes waved in victory from the hilltop. The commander of Strahl's brigade—Colonel Andrew Kellar—was stunned to

see a mass of Federals pouring over the heights. But that was nothing compared to what followed: his men also turned to see the breakthrough and promptly ran for their lives. Added pressure came from Colonel Charles Doolittle, the First Brigade commander from Schofield's Third Division. Schofield had turned to Doolittle when Thomas ordered an attack to support McArthur's assault. Due west of the rebel line, Doolittle threw his people against what was left of Brown's division. Maney's and Gist's brigades tried to answer the challenge, but when Datus Coon's dismounted Unionists—fresh from sweeping aside Ector and Coleman—came spilling across their left flank, the two Southern commands fell apart. Perhaps at this point the only organized Confederate command remaining on this flank was Reynolds' brigade. Earlier it had been pulled from Walthall's line to reinforce the left flank, but by the time the Arkansans had reached their position, Cheatham's corps had crumbled. They tried to stem the panic, but none of their comrades would join their line. They were soon swept up

in the crush as the stricken Confederates raced for the safety of the Overton Hills.<sup>63</sup>

His division destroyed and his options gone, Mark Lowrey made a mad dash to avoid the rapidly closing pincers, somehow escaping while a corporal's guard bought a sliver of time. He found the army in "inglorious retreat," and with Wilson's men across the Granny White Pike, the only way out was over the Overton Hills. Hood too found himself caught in the undertow, his men dully ignoring his pleas to rally. It was a moment unique in the annals of the Army of Tennessee, described perfectly by one Southerner who wrote, "I have never seen an army so confused and demoralized."<sup>64</sup>

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It was near 4:30 p.m. A sickening cacophony roiled the landscape as Hood's army began to disintegrate. What remained of A.P. Stewart's corps melted when McArthur's brigades broke Loring's front and crushed French's flank. Then, as A.J. Smith's triumphant men began to work their way east through Stephen D. Lee's rear, Major General Edward

Nashville and see dozens of buildings that worked into the Federal occupation and the 1864 battle, including the starkly beautiful capitol. Just off two interstates, a rebuilt Fort Negley has been rediscovered by the city and her citizens, and it stands now as the battlefield's sentinel, silent but impressive, its secrets there for the taking. Just to the southwest rises what the locals called Kirkpatrick Hill, upon which the Federals built Blockhouse Casino. Standing near Negley's southwest point, you suddenly realize that you are close to the camera angle of one of those stunning period photos of the Federal defense line. And there begins a fascinating exercise. The Battle of Nashville Preservation Society and Mark Zimmerman have published *Guide to Civil War Nashville*. Buy it and follow the Federal lines. You can easily recognize the heights that the Federal engineers used to locate the defenses, especially when you climb Love Circle to the highest point in the city. Suddenly you are in the middle of a living map, and with a good set of binoculars both the Federal and Confederate lines are readily apparent. It is truly a stunning sight.

Working through the traffic to locate Granbury's Lunette can be a chore. Once there, you may find your visit interrupted by passing semi-trailers. But walk west to the railroad and look south. The chasm that stopped Steedman's advance yawns before you, and the action—the stymied Federal advance, the bitter Confederate response—becomes remarkably clear. The lunette is one of the battlefield's small jewels.

Yes, it took a long time. I had to visit the site of Redoubt One a number of times to appreciate its location. But now I can cross I-440 on the Hillsboro Pike and readily make out the hill upon which it sits. Despite the houses and churches, the lights and the traffic, I can imagine what Wood's men saw as they advanced south from Montgomery Hill. And once I drive up that hill and stop at the preserved earthworks, I look back down and see the Pike and wonder what those incredibly brave Southerners were thinking as Wood's men spread out before them. Especially at night, the view here can be extraordinary.

Redoubt Two is gone, lost in a townhouse development. I've been told that vestiges of Redoubt Three are nearby on a church's property, but you can park in the church's parking lot and appreciate the strength of the position. What is left of Redoubt Four stands forlornly between two upscale houses in a modern development, but you can drive west on Hobbs Road from the Hillsboro Pike and easily mount the hill south of the development where the rest of the redoubt stretched. Then, if you're lucky, as you speed south on Hillsboro you may catch a glance of one of those Nashville Battlefield highway signs, this one telling you that Redoubt Five stood just west of the roadway.

Overton Hill is now crowned by a football field, and its once-dramatic contours have been flattened by roadwork and such. But just north on the Franklin Pike there are open stretches that allow you to imagine the formation of the Federal lines and see in the distance what is left of Stephen D. Lee's Confederate positions. Traveling west on Battery Lane you begin to pick up the stone wall that marked the northern border of the Lea property and anchored the central portion of Hood's second defensive line. Then you find Benton Smith and Shy's Hill Roads. You park by another one of those highway signs and start climbing the nearby steps. There's a lot of them, so bring some water. As you drag yourself up the rude stairway, there rises like a phantom off to your right the unmistakable hump of earthworks. They come closer as you reach the summit, the desperate product of those shaken Confederates on the night of December 15, 1864. As they ring the summit and you follow their profile, you realize you are facing west, right where Benton Smith's men stood after their day-long pummeling by the Northern artillery, where McArthur's determined Yankees burst over the crest and blasted the Army of Tennessee into the folds of time. And for a moment, imagination is unnecessary. You are surrounded, by trees, by a battered trenchline, by history and her haunted watchmen. And for a moment, it is perfect. □



Johnson's division crumbled under the pressure. Thomas Wood's people saw Johnson's lines begin to break, so the Federals took up the attack, applying more fuel to the fire and capturing Johnson for their effort. Major General Carter Stevenson's division was next to disappear, Cummings' and Pettus' brigades concussed on flank and front, the Georgians and Alabamans streaming in confusion across the fields and down the Franklin Pike. One Confederate on the heights of Overton Hill could see nearly a mile to the west, and the scene begged description:

[W]e saw men and riderless horses rushing in wild confusion ...towards the Franklin Pike in our rear, closely pursued by the "boys in blue," amid the smoke and carnage of battle, and then regiment after regiment falling back in succession from their works to avoid being flanked.... Soon, over the plains in full view, there was a scene of confusion that baffles description.<sup>65</sup>

Stephen D. Lee sat a horse near the Franklin Pike, and as he watched the terrible drama unfold, he knew immediately he had no answers. Of his corps, the lone organized command on the field was Clayton's division, so Lee bravely rallied some of Stevenson's men while he ordered Clayton south on the Franklin Pike. With Smith's horde advancing from the west and the Federal survivors of the afternoon attack pressing his front, Clayton barely extracted his brigades from Overton Hill. "Many surrendered at the works," recalled an Alabaman of his last moments on the hill, "but most of the men tried to escape. When soldiers are in a stampede, they are without control, and this was our condition." In the rainy gloaming of his army's worst hour, Stephen Lee took up the rearguard of John Bell Hood's crushed command.<sup>66</sup>

As night settled in, a drenching storm broke over the smoking landscape. Hood's entire army was tossed across the Overton Hills in vast disarray, struggling up the rain-soaked slopes, with enemy riflery and shellfire scourging their retreat. One butternut paused at the ridge line and looked back on the vista of his army's graveyard:

A sickening scene, the closing act in the terrible tragedy of Nash-

ville. Our army was pressed against the foot of the ridge on which I stood and was struggling desperately to make its way in a sidelong manner to the only avenue of escape, the Franklin Pike.... Here and there a squad of our men would stop and fire a few rounds...but that was all.

Most stunning for the Southerner was the color of the soldiers doing the pushing: "Oh woeful humiliation, what did I see! The faces of Negroes!"<sup>67</sup>

Some two and a half miles south of Compton Hill on the Granny White Pike, James Chalmers held off James Wilson's pursuit at a vicious little encounter called the Battle of the Barri-cades. It was a fight notable for an encounter between Colonel Edward Rucker and a Federal officer, wherein Rucker and his antagonist managed to exchange swords before the Confederate was subdued. Rucker would eventually lose his arm from the wounding, but Chalmers' night action bought enough time to allow Lee to pass the Franklin Pike intersection with the Granny White near Hollow Tree Gap, essentially saving what was left of the army.

To the north, George Thomas' victorious army collected the booty of their overwhelming victory. At a cost of 3,061 killed, wounded, and missing—nearly a third of them from Wood and Steedman's assault on Overton Hill—the Federals inflicted some 2,300 casualties while capturing over 4,400 prisoners and fifty-three artillery pieces. Thomas himself was elated, crying out to James Wilson, "Dang it to hell, Wilson, didn't I tell you we could lick 'em, didn't I tell you we could lick 'em?" It was perhaps Thomas' closest encounter with profane language during the entire war, but he deserved the moment. He had kept his own council and matured his own plans at his own pace. As a result, he and his men were celebrating one of the most decisive victories for Federal arms in the entire Civil War.<sup>68</sup>

To the south, John Bell Hood sat in his headquarters near Franklin. In a few short weeks he had overseen the destruction of his army, first by bleeding it outside Atlanta, then for little purpose against the impregnable Federal works at Franklin, and finally by sacrificing it for even less reason on the hills south of Nashville. He sat alone with his thoughts,

his army a wreck, his career and his country virtually ended. An eyewitness found him "much agitated and affected, pulling his hair with his one hand, and crying like his heart would break."<sup>69</sup>

His were the tears of an army. □

**PATRICK BRENNAN**, an associate editor of *North & South*, has written two major works on the Civil War: *Secessionville: Assault On Charleston* (Savas Publishing) and *To Die Game: Major General Jeb Stuart* (Farnsworth House Military Impressions). He is a nationally recognized musician, producer, and composer. This article is his twelfth to appear in *North & South*.



The Battle of Nashville monument, also known as the Peace Monument, stands on the Granny White Pike just north of Hood's first line of defense.

#### NOTES:

1. James Rusling, *Men and Things I Saw in Civil War Days* (NY, 1899), p. 86. Rusling's grasp of the facts is tenuous at best. The officer claimed that the party he attended was hosted by former Supreme Court Justice John Campbell and that both Schofield and IV Corps commander General Thomas J. Wood were at Thomas' headquarters. It is difficult to believe that



- Campbell, an assistant secretary of war in the Confederate cabinet, would host a part of Federal dignitaries, and Schofield was still on the march.
2. John Beach, *History of the Fortieth Ohio Volunteer Infantry* (London, 1884), p. 98.
  3. John Schofield, *Forty-Six Years In The Army* (Norman, 1998), p. 226.
  4. Mary Maxwell Claiborne, *Travelers Rest and Its Owners During the War Between the States*, as quoted in David Logsdon, *Eyewitnesses at the Battle of Nashville* (Nashville, 2004), p. 4; John Copley, *A Sketch of the Battle of Franklin, Tenn.; with Reminiscences of Camp Douglas* (Austin, 1893), p. 66; Wiley Sword, *Embrace An Angry Wind* (New York, 1991), p. 274.
  5. Francis Stewart diary, entry for December 1, 1864, Francis Stewart Papers, Center For Archival Collections, Bowling Green State University.
  6. Virgil Murphey diary, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina; Rachel Carter Craighead diary, Tennessee State Library and Archives.
  7. *Ibid.*
  8. United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records* 129 vols. (Washington, 1880-1901), series 1, vol. XLV, pt. 2, p. 94 (hereafter cited as OR; all references are to series 1 unless otherwise noted).
  9. John Bell Hood, *Advance and Retreat* (Bloomington, 1959), p. 300.
  10. J.W.A. Wright, Hood's Nashville Campaign, Philadelphia Weekly Times, November 15, 1884. From Peter Cozzens and Robert Girardi, *The New Annals of the Civil War* (Mechanicsburg, 2004), pp. 472-473.
  11. See Mark Zimmerman, *Guide To Civil War Nashville* (Nashville, 2004), pp. 36-37 for an excellent overview of the evolution of Nashville's defenses and a good modern guide for the enterprising urban battlefield trumper.
  12. W.D. Gale, December 9, 1864, letter; Gale Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.
  13. Samuel C. Broughton, *Revelations of a Soldier's Life* (n.d.), as quoted in Logsdon, p. 5. Broughton believed that Hood's men showed up on the 1st, while George Thomas thought it the 3rd. Most accounts place Lee's arrival on the 2nd.
  14. OR, XLV, pt. 2, p. 18.
  15. A.C. McLeary, *Humorous Incidents of the Civil War* (n.p., 1902), as quoted in Logsdon, p. 12.
  16. *Ibid.*
  17. Henry C. Fike letters, December 1864, Fike Collection, University of Kansas Library; Elijah Edwards diary, entry for December 5, 1864, Depauw University Archives and Special Collections; Abram Stafford, "The Civil War Era Diaries of Abram Harrison Stafford and Mary Elizabeth Churchill of Chardon, Geauga County, Ohio," Michael H. Stafford collection, Los Angeles, CA.
  18. Stephen D. Lee letter, December 6, 1864, James Thomas Harrison Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library.
  19. OR, XLV, pt. 1, p. 613.
  20. Milroy letter to his wife, January 1, 1865, Milroy Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana; OR, XLV, pt. 1, p. 617.
  21. Supplement to the Official Records (Wilmington, NC, 1997), Part 1, Vol. 7, p. 682.
  22. John Allen Wyeth, *Life of General Nathan Bedford Forrest* (New York, 1899), p. 488; James Lee McDonough, *Nashville: The Western Confederacy's Final Gamble* (Knoxville, 2004), p. 147; W.S. Carson to Elvira, December 19, 1864, Carson Family Papers, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta; Milroy letter to his wife, January 1, 1865.
  23. Supplement to the OR, Part 1, Vol. 7, p. 683.
  24. OR, XLV, pt. 2, p. 70.
  25. William Hair diary, entry for December 7, 1864, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN; Henry Hempstead diary, entry for December 7, 1864, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI; Sword, p. 303.
  26. *Confederate Veteran*, Vol. XXVI, p. 251; Logsdon, p. 24; William J. Worsham, *The Old Nineteenth Tennessee Regiment CSA* (n.p., 1902).
  27. James Pressnall memoir, as quoted in Logsdon, p. 24.
  28. OR, XLV, pt. 1, p. 722.
  29. James Dinkins, *Personal Recollections and Experiences in the Confederate Army* (n.p., 1897) as quoted in Logsdon, p. 26.
  30. Rusling, as quoted in Logsdon, p. 30.
  31. OR, XLV, pt. 2, p. 143.
  32. *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, vol. 4, p. 467.
  33. OR, XLV, pt. 1, p. 154; John T. Smith, *A History of the Thirty-First Regiment of Indiana Volunteer Infantry in the War of the Rebellion* (Indianapolis, 1900), as quoted in Logsdon, p. 37.
  34. Francis R. Stewart diary, entry for December 15th, SHC, University of North Carolina.
  35. *Confederate Veteran*, XII, p. 348.
  36. *Ibid.*, XVII, p. 12.
  37. Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes Jr., *The Civil War Memoir of Philip Daingerfield Stephenson* (Conway, Ark., 1995), p. 321.
  38. OR, XLV, pt. 1, p. 128; Ashbury Kerwood, *The Annals of the Fifty-Seventh Regiment* (1868), p. 303.
  39. Samuel C. Broughton, *Revelations of a Soldier's Life*, as quoted in Logsdon, pp. 54-55.
  40. Sword, p. 330.
  41. Logsdon, p. 45.
  42. *Confederate Veteran*, XII, p. 484.
  43. *Confederate Veteran*, XII, p. 485; James Maxwell, *Autobiography of James Robert Maxwell* (Baltimore, 1996), p. 269.
  44. O.A. Abbott, "The Last Battle of Nashville," Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, Nebraska (1902), p. 239.
  45. John Stibbs, "McArthur's Division at Nashville," MOLLUS-Illinois (Chicago, 1907), vol. 4, pp. 492-493.
  46. C. Irvine Walker, *Personal Experiences of Lt. Colonel C. Irvine Walker in the battles of Franklin and Nashville*, as quoted in Logsdon, p. 57.
  47. Daniel Reynolds diary, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries.
  48. OR, XLV, pt. 1, p. 709.
  49. Gale letter, January 29, 1865, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.
  50. T.J. Walker, "Reminiscences of the Civil War," Special Collections Library, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.
  51. OR, XLV, pt. 2, p. 196.
  52. *Ibid.*, pt. 1, p. 131.
  53. Overton Hill was also called Peach Orchard Hill.
  54. Frederick Moose, as quoted in Logsdon, p. 86; Edgar Jones, *History of the 18th Alabama Infantry* (Birmingham, 1994), p. 47.
  55. Sword, 362-63; OR, XLV, pt. 1, p. 705; Alexis Cope, *The Fifteenth Ohio Volunteers and its Campaigns* (Columbus, 1916), p. 545.
  56. OR, XLV, pt. 1, p. 705; *Confederate Veteran*, vol. 16, p. 192; Ashbury Kerwood, *Annals of the Fifty-Seventh* (1868), p. 189.
  57. *Confederate Veteran*, XXXIII, p. 222.
  58. Sam Watkins, *Co. Aytch* (Wilmington, NC, 1987), p. 222.
  59. *Battles & Leaders*, vol. 4, p. 469; Thomas Van Horn, *The Life of Major General George H. Thomas* (New York, 1882), p. 332.
  60. OR, XLV, pt. 1, p. 461.
  61. James L. Cooper, *Nashville Tennessean*, December 6, 1964.
  62. *Confederate Veteran*, vol. XVII, p. 13.
  63. The Overton Hills—as opposed to Overton Hill—made up the next formation south of the Overton Hill—Compton Hill line. All were part of the Brentwood Hills.
  64. Mark Lowrey autobiography, USAMHI; as quoted in Sword, p. 379; Watkins, p. 222.
  65. Wright, *Philadelphia Weekly Times*, November 15, 1884, as quoted in Cozzens, p. 480.
  66. *Confederate Veteran*, vol. 16, p. 192.
  67. Hughes, p. 332.
  68. *Battles and Leaders*, vol. 4, p. 470.
  69. Watkins, p. 225.



SILVANA R. SIDDALI

# “Must We Not *Punish to Conquer?*”

## THE MILITANT NORTHERN HOME FRONT AND THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF HARD WAR IDEAS

BY LATE MAY 1862 General George B. McClellan's Virginia campaign was grinding to a halt. Robert E. Lee was driving McClellan off the Peninsula, and General Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson was pushing General John Pope back toward Washington. In the early days of the war northern newspapers had rhapsodized over McClellan's blue eyes and self-possessed demeanor, and young women had idolized the handsome general. But now many northern citizens were beginning to grow impatient with his endless delays. One young Ohio lady looking at a portrait of McClellan, when told it was a good one, commented that any artist could get a good likeness of the general because he was always “setting still.” And one thoroughly disgusted Indianan thought that while “our western Soldiers [were] doing Bravely,” General McClellan was an “old foggy.”<sup>1</sup>



General George B. McClellan (above).

Opposite: Thousands crowd New York City's Union Square on April 20, 1861. Similar gatherings occurred throughout the North as news spread of the fall of Fort Sumter, whose battle-scarred U.S. flag flies from the statue of George Washington in the foreground.

While the Union armies were beset by delays and defeats in the first two years of the war, and pursued a conciliatory policy dictated by moderate politicians in Washington and by Democrat generals, pro-war congressional radicals tried to undergird the faltering war effort through punitive measures. They proposed many bills whose purpose was to deprive enemy civilians of the means to wage their rebellion, such as anti-slavery legislation, confiscation bills, and laws to punish treason. Republicans in congress and voters at home believed that such legislation was necessary to achieve a military victory. Indeed, the northern pro-war home front demanded private property seizures because they thought the federal armies were being hampered by too careful adherence to constitutional guarantees of private property ownership. But the conservative opposition in Washington and on the home front continually struggled to soften such measures, both in congressional debates and in the editorials published in conservative newspapers. As a result, the militant pro-war home front (both Republicans and many War Democrats) opposed what they saw as a new, “modern,” soft conception of warfare. They demanded a return to earlier, more resolute methods of waging war, which many felt had to include attacks on the private property of rebellious citizens in addition to decisive military victories.

Such arguments gave rise to a protracted, bitter debate in Congress. Congressional speeches for and against punitive measures were carefully reported in newspapers, much to the ire of northern voters, who considered that Congress and the army were still far too careful of the enemy's rights. On April 23, 1862, after reading one of Ohio senator John Sherman's moderate speeches on confis-

cation in his newspaper, the father of two Union soldiers fired off an angry letter protesting that Sherman was still being far too careful of rebel property rights. He now demanded that the senator immediately “furlough” both of his boys. “If you cant confiscate the property of the Rebbles,” he declared, “you cant ceepe my sons.” He was not prepared to sacrifice the lives of his beloved sons for a government that was unwilling to fight the war with all the weapons at its disposal. The only way to win, he told Sherman, was to “ask no quarter and give none, destroy the [w]hole country, and slay everything you come toward.” Belligerent northern citizens, in contrast to their more conservative brethren or their representatives in Washington, had no trouble linking the seizure of rebel land, crops, and slaves with national war aims. They were tired of the politicians' endless harping on rebels' private property rights, they were tired of continual efforts to conciliate slaveowners in the South and in the border states, and above all, they were tired of all forms of negotiation, compromise, and discussions about principles. Militant northerners had no interest in reconstructing the Union “as it was”; indeed, what many of them wanted now was an “*overwhelming, crushing, exterminating blow.*”<sup>2</sup>

Winning the war, militant northerners were convinced, would involve personal attacks against individual southerners, not conciliation or negotiation with rebellious states or with the Confederate government. Republicans—both those serving in Congress and those at home—believed that the confiscation of southern private property was a military necessity, but the voters also saw it as a way of achieving retribution against the rebels and reimbursement for losses incurred as a result of the war. This view







was not entirely as shortsighted about the future of the reunion of the states as it may sound. While conservatives and moderates lamented the harshness of punitive measures, claiming that they would make a peaceful reconstruction of the Union nearly impossible, hawkish Republicans and War Democrats thought that there was simply no point in fighting the war if the South were left intact to rise again or if, at the very least, the South were not thoroughly brought in line with northern values of free labor, industry, enterprise, and democracy.

Within the first two years of the war deliberations about principles (or, indeed, reliance on any form of rhetoric) had become thoroughly discredited; bellicose northerners equated oratory with compromise and weakness, and even with the wicked old institution of slavery. Moderate Republicans in Congress might have hesitated to use military necessity as a justification for harsh wartime legislation, but their constituents contemptuously dismissed such quibbling. They were far less hesitant to equate punitive measures with a military victory and with personal retribution against individual southerners. For example, an Indianan begged Illinois congressman Elihu Washburne not to allow Congress to adjourn “until you pass a strong and stringent confiscation act and provide that the leaders of this rebel[li]on shall be hung—confound this sympathy for them.” An Ohio resident told John Sherman that the administration had been far too tender of the “supposed rights of the rebels under the Constitution,” warning Sherman that “the masses are ripe and ripe for the most thorough kind of dealing with the southern hell hounds (pardon the expression).”<sup>3</sup>

These aggressive attitudes pervaded many areas of northern civilian life.

Above right: Indiana congressman George W. Julian.

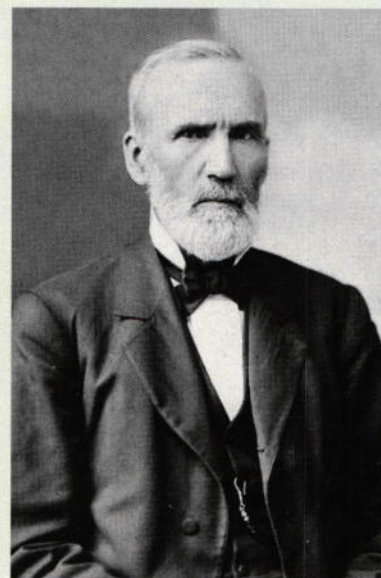
Northern women showed support for the Union war effort in a variety of ways: (above left) patriotic students of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts pose with the massive U.S. flag they stitched together; (right) ladies gather at New York’s Cooper Institute to organize the Women’s Central Association of Relief, a society to furnish supplies for Union soldiers and nurses to minister to the sick and wounded. Other women expressed their support of the war in less traditional means, including writing their congressmen pointed letters regarding politics and policy.

Nineteenth-century women, for example, might have been expected to express less warlike sentiments; indeed, women rarely wrote to men they did not know personally, always prefacing their letters with apologies for presuming to do so. A few northern ladies felt so strongly about the conduct of the war, however, that they were moved to communicate their opinions to their representatives in Washington. A woman named A.A. Cochran, who had several brothers serving in the Union army, wrote a strongly worded letter to Elihu Washburne. She begged pardon for writing, but declared that whenever she thought of the rebels she found it difficult to keep her temper “within bounds.” Although she claimed she did not wish to harm the souls of the traitors, she thought it would be a good thing if they would all repent of their sins, and then “all get killed before they have a chance

to backslide.” Perhaps Miss Cochran had not thought through her ideas while she was penning her letter to Washburne; before she reached the end, she apparently thought better of her bloodthirstiness, and added a hasty postscript: “Please excuse what I have written, that was uncalled for.” Another lady, named Sarah P. Edson, questioned whether the present administration’s policy was not “please don’t hurt, but protect the enemy.” This struck her as nonsensical. She asked radical Indiana congressman George W. Julian, “Must we not *punish to conquer*?” Julian would no doubt have agreed with her, but however much the home front demanded punitive measures, and however much the radical politicians desired to gratify their constituents, the moderates in Congress and at home remained determined to fight all legislative proposals to attack southern land or slaves.<sup>4</sup>



OSTENDORF COLLECTION



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



Although not surprising in the midst of a civil war, this ferocious talk probably reflected impatience with the government as much as rage with the rebels. A man from Ohio demanded to know how long it would take “this people to learn that the only way to treat this gangrene [sic] of rebellion is to strike home.” He prescribed a severe policy in strong language: “Give it no quarter, down with it, death to traitors & all who sympathise with traitors is my doctrine. None of this half way namby pamby dealing with traitors.” Similarly, the *New York Evening Post* stated baldly that the rebels had forfeited their civil rights by the act of treason and that the only way they would be “purged of their crime” was for Congress to administer the appropriate punishment, without stopping to question the constitutionality of their actions. An Indianan named Jesse F. Miller informed Elihu Washburne that his blood boiled when

he heard “men commiserating with . . . traitors,” who were nothing but “vipers who would fain cover our Constitution with Slime and swallow it.”<sup>5</sup>

Much of the Republican home front’s impatience with rhetoric was tied to the political debates over the constitutional guarantees for rebel civilians’ property rights, but war-minded northerners were equally tired of pronouncements by military officers. The officers’ more pugnacious proclamations were inevitably revoked by the president, while their more peaceful edicts simply aroused the ire of militant citizens. For example, President Lincoln had revoked John C. Frémont’s martial law proclamation in St. Louis, in early autumn 1861; and conservative generals like George B. McClellan and Don Carlos Buell frequently reassured southern civilians that they would protect their property. As historian Mark Grimsley has pointed out,

until 1862 most Union generals followed a conciliatory policy toward white southerners, which included respecting their property and returning runaway slaves to their owners. In a December 1861 editorial entitled “Slavery, the War, and Proclamations,” the *Boston Daily Evening Transcript* declared that the Union now consisted of “a people and an army led by a debating club.” An anonymous pamphlet published the following summer similarly decried the propensity of politicians and army officers to content themselves with beautiful rhetoric as a substitute for aggression toward the enemy. According to the author, an army led by words alone could not achieve significant military victories, “unless our armies advance and read them to the enemy.” The *North American Review* observed sarcastically that “siege guns, shells, solid shot, telescopic rifles, and Minié bullets are as nothing when compared with a proclamation.” Nineteenth-century Americans loved a good speech, but by mid-1862, Republican voters had reached the end of their patience with oratory. Northern newspapers reported endless proclamations and “general orders” issued by Union army officers, especially those addressing the southern civilian population. It appeared that while the home front seethed and Congress pondered the constitutional rights of rebels, the northern armies had to content themselves with proclamations that sounded grandiose and accomplished nothing.<sup>6</sup>

Pro-war Union citizens believed that the idea of fighting a war along stated principles, and engaging in rhetoric about these principles (such as discussions concerning the constitutionality of certain military actions, or adherence to international codes of civilized warfare), epitomized modern weakness. Around this time the term “modern warfare,” inevitably used in a pejorative, contemptuous sense, began to appear frequently

Above right: John C. Frémont, c.1856.

Northern civilians-turned-soldiers head off for war: (top left) A confident young infantryman steps upon a fallen Confederate flag in this Currier & Ives print, “The Union Volunteer” (May 1861); (left) Yankee soldiers march southward at the opening of the war, the Washington skyline behind them, in this 1862 lithograph by J.H. Bufford. Before long, northern civilians would grow impatient with the delays and defeats of their armies.





in northern pamphlets, newspapers, and private correspondence. Northerners thought that the real definition of warfare lay somewhere in the heroic past, when warriors had not hesitated to strike a mortal blow against an enemy. Many northerners, especially Republicans, now concluded that modern warfare was synonymous with abstract principles, flowery speeches, extreme courtesy toward enemy soldiers, and a too-careful regard for the foe's rights and goods. Modern warfare was characterized by explanations, excuses, and persuasion. But common sense dictated that war should cause destruction and suffering for the enemy. According to historian Charles Royster, no Civil War general had read Prussian military theorist Karl von Clausewitz's *On War*, which had not yet been translated into English. The famous pamphleteer Charles Janeway Stillé, however, had traveled throughout Europe before the Civil War, and may indeed have read and been influenced by Clausewitz. In early 1862 Stillé published a best-selling and frequently quoted pamphlet that provided a standard nineteenth-century definition of war: "For what is all war but an appeal to force to settle questions of national interest which peaceful discussion has failed to settle; and what is an army, but only another argument, the *ultima ratio*, which, if successful in decisive battles, must give the law to the conquered?" That is, since political arguments had failed, the Union army would now have to use force to reestablish the laws of the land. Force would triumph where reason had foundered. Even the Reverend James Ward, a conservative pro-Union Presbyterian minister living in Alexandria, Virginia, demanded a hard war policy. He espoused Christian principles of forgiveness, forbearance, and charity—even toward the enemy—and had little sympathy with the harsh rhetoric of his more warlike contemporaries, but there were limits to the Reverend Ward's patience. Early in December 1861 he confided to his diary that "[a]ll our loyal people ask that the houses and lands and gold and silver, and stocks and securities, and cotton and powder and cannon and ships of Jefferson Davis and his robber associates, should be confiscated, and, rather than it should be used to damage and destroy the Union, should be annihilated."<sup>7</sup>

An explicit denunciation of "modern" warfare appeared in a pamphlet published in 1862 by New York businessman Sinclair Tousey, who was deeply contemptuous of what he called "this new soft war policy." Harsh war was a military necessity, and soldiers who were fighting at the front should be supported by decisive measures at home. "It is a new idea," Tousey claimed, "that in war a measure tending to weaken your enemy is vindictive. War means destruction. To destroy your enemy is not vindictive." In fact, it was the nation's duty, "in justice to those who fight [our] battles," to assail the enemy in all his weak points, specifically his property and his slaves. Such a policy would destroy the southern armies because the Confederacy's white men would now be forced to produce or starve. Further, he had nothing but contempt for those weak-minded northerners who sought to enjoin against harsh war measures. "The skulls of our brave boys are made into drinking cups by the very rebels whose slaves we propose to confiscate, and when we say deprive them of the power to polish more skulls, we are accused of being 'vindictive.'" Tousey's view was representative not only of the warlike element on the home front, but also of many Democrats who otherwise deplored interference with the institution of slavery. The moderate press, while not explicitly endorsing sweeping punitive legislation or wholesale emancipation, nevertheless supported the idea that warfare should be destructive to the enemy and calmly accepted the fact that it would ultimately cause the civilian population to suffer.<sup>8</sup>

However much the northern public may have wished for decisive action on the part of the government and the army, their hopes were continually frustrated by conservative political opposition to harsh legislation and punitive action. In early March, Indiana banker Calvin Fletcher pointed out the difference between home front opinion and that of the government, which had "tried to plaster up secession to make it as easy as possible to win the disapp[ointed] back to obedience. I think it needs a retribution of greater severity than our public authorities are disposed to give it." Radical newspapers like the *Chicago Tribune* denounced conservative members of Congress who voiced their opposition to such harsh laws as the Second Confiscation

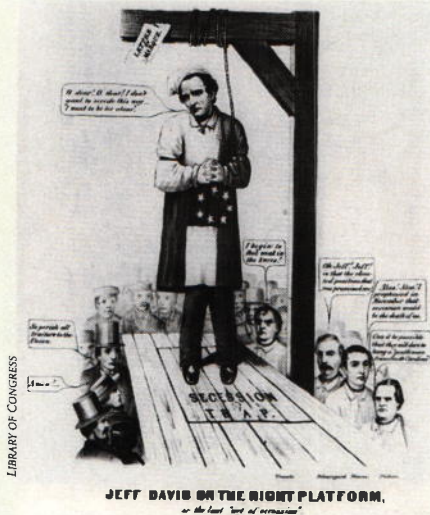


Illinois congressman Elihu Washburne.

Act. "The reactionary party in Congress have mustered all their forces to defeat the confiscation act," the *Tribune* pronounced. Their conservative ideas were born of a "mawkish kindness" that flinched at proposals to seize enemy property. It appeared that the administration had decided that their harshest weapons should be "sugar plums." Such policies, most Republicans believed, merely served to strengthen the rebellion. The only way to achieve victory was to punish the traitors, "impoverishing and subjugating them." In fact, many northerners now became quite blunt in their avowal that the only way to win the war was to crush the rebels. There was no time now for "silly sentimentality" (no doubt referring to the conservatives' frequent asseverations that southern rebels were fellow citizens). Whoever struck the "freest, fullest, foulest blow" would win the war.<sup>9</sup>

There was little evidence of "mawkishness" among pro-war citizens. Vehement sentiments toward individual rebels were especially evident in speeches whose purpose was to inspire public support for the Union cause. Throughout the first two years of the war, all the major cities in the North held mass rallies and invited prominent men of affairs to give speeches in support of the war effort. In articulating ideas about the conduct of the war, Union rally speeches made use of ferocious, if somewhat vague, rhetoric, usually to wild applause. At one such rally held in Union Square, a New York attorney named Charles King exhorted his audience to "go forth and make the war as fierce and bloody as it is possible for a civilized nation to make it. No modera-





tion is shown to us; let us show none to them." He thought the U.S. government had heretofore "acted too much on the defensive; let us now act on the offensive. [Cheers.]" Further, the North should be more aggressive and stop guarding rebel property: "This may be magnanimous, but it is not war." Republican voters' frustrations with the administration's hesitant policies, and with the dilatory nature of the army's progress, would soon prove costly to their party leaders. In the fall 1862 congressional elections, Democrats gained a great deal of ground, adding thirty-five seats. Democrats also elected governors in New York and New Jersey. The Republican leadership blamed their severe losses on Lincoln's cautious policies and on the anger of northern Republican voters who had demanded harsh measures against the rebels, and who subsequently abstained from voting

In these early-war images, swift action is called for against the secessionists. Above: Under the words "Annihilation To Traitors," this E.B. and E.C. Kellogg lithograph depicts an American eagle ridding its national nest of unnatural Confederate offspring. Left: A whimpering Jefferson Davis stands upon a gallows and awaits execution. Next in line, with nooses around their necks, are other prominent Confederates—(left to right) Secretary of State Robert Toombs, General P.G.T. Beauregard, Vice President Alexander Stephens, and South Carolina governor Francis W. Pickens.

in local and state elections. Union soldiers, many of whom were shifting their allegiance toward the Republican Party, would likely have lessened the Democratic victory. Lincoln later commented on the fact that because they were away at the front, they had been unable to cast their votes in the 1862 elections; this difficulty was resolved in 1864 when sixteen states instituted absentee ballots, and soldiers were furloughed to allow them to vote at home.<sup>10</sup>

The fierce tone of northern home front rhetoric might indicate a desire for wholesale destruction of the southern states or harsh, even cruel measures against all rebel citizens. But despite the rather sweeping nature of some of their expressions, such as a Union army doctor's demand for the "entire extermination of the villains," many northerners believed that in the long run a "feather bed war" would be more cruel than a harsh one because it would last longer and cause more bloodshed and destruction. Such a policy, which northerners called "maudlin" or "namby pamby,"

would permit southerners to return to power after the war was over. A German immigrant living in Illinois wrote to Elihu Washburne: "If there be any truth established by the universal experience of nations it is this: that to carry the *spirit of peace* into war . . . is a *weak and cruel policy*. . . . *Languid war* can do nothing which . . . submission can not do better, and to act on any other principle is not to save money but to squander it." Another of Washburne's correspondents shared this view. If the country refused to fight the war in earnest, that meant that the "immense public Debt [was] only spent to prepare the way for the Slaveholders to come in & return to their old domineering position." Finally, he asked an unanswerable question: "If it was the intention to subdue the Rebellion why this wonderful Feather bed policy for Secessiondom[?]" Soft war was not only ineffective, but it actually aided the enemy in prosecuting their treasonous designs. The *Boston Daily Evening Transcript* thought that by opposing even "moderate schemes of emancipation and confiscation, [conservatives] practically tell the rebels that they may fight until they are utterly exhausted, and then be received back into the Union without punishment." While this might be called a conciliatory and constitutional policy, it "certainly ignores every principle of common sense."<sup>11</sup>

Militant northerners believed that the only way to reconstruct the nation successfully was to begin by thoroughly crushing the rebellion. But that did not mean they were blind to the consequences of punitive measures. In spite of their pugnacious tone against the rebels, most belligerent northerners understood that the nation would someday have to be reunited. A Union victory, Republicans felt, ought to entail bringing the southern states to heel and permanently back into the Union. Some northerners may have loudly demanded the "entire extermination" of the traitors, but they had to accept that the government could not order the wholesale hanging of rebels. Indeed, many thought that attacks on rebel private property was a more civilized punishment for the rebels than execution for treason. The *Chicago Tribune* put it this way: "If the Government cannot take [a rebel's] slaves, can it take his life?" The *Tribune* pointed out that a criminal forfeited "every right which



would interfere with the arrest of his act.” Therefore, would it not be more humane for the government to “take slaves than to kill rebels[?]” Similarly, the *New York Times* argued that confiscation was more peaceful than warfare. “To insist upon bloodshed, when a less fatal alternative is presented, is certainly not the dictate of humanity or prudence.”<sup>12</sup>

Some northern newspapers began voicing the curious idea that harsh war would in the long run be beneficial for the South. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* claimed that while warfare had a “grim visage” and a “horrid front,” it still had its “humanities and courtesies.” Other newspapers echoed this sentiment; some seemed to imply that the Union army would almost kill the enemy with kindness. The *Boston Daily Evening Transcript* claimed that, indeed, the “sincerest regard to the whole South—setting aside all other considerations—demands now the unflinching prosecution of the war.” Since the rebel leaders had “made dupes of many—possibly the majority of its adherents,” the rightful authority had to win back its power by force “in order to prove that it seeks to maintain itself only that it may be a blessing to the whole land.” The *Springfield (Massachusetts) Daily Republican* wrote lyrically about what it called the “fruits of invasion.” In this editorial, the paper extolled the many benefits the Union army would extend to the southern people. They would feed, clothe, and educate poor southerners. Indeed, the *Republican* was entirely convinced that an “invasion like this cannot make enemies.”<sup>13</sup>

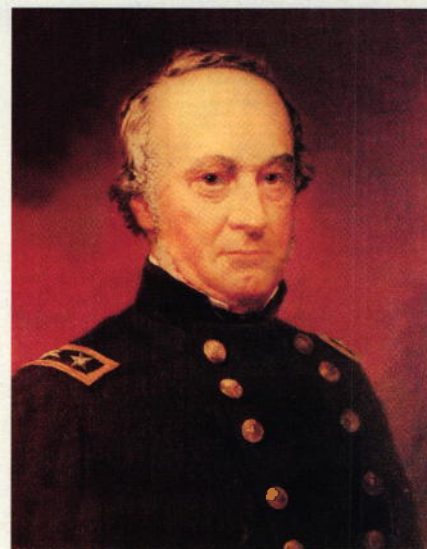
Moreover, in spite of their blustering about the private property of rebels, most Union citizens drew the line at plunder. Because they were rarely able to render a clear definition of the difference between forage, the legal confiscation of property, and plunder, however, their arguments betrayed a great deal of ambivalence. Many newspaper editorials asserted, rather lamely, that such actions would not be “Christian,” in spite of the fact that they had been saying all along that the time for gentlemanly warfare was now over. At the same time, however, newspapers like the *Boston Daily Evening Transcript* thought that the Union armies should “find their subsistence in the States they occupy,” because this would “obviate the necessity of long supply trains.” In this editorial, the *Transcript* ap-



Above: In this Alfred Waud sketch, Union soldiers feast upon the spoils of a successful foraging expedition in enemy country. Many northern civilians embraced the notion of extensive foraging on the part of their troops, even before the Union army's higher command sanctioned such a policy.

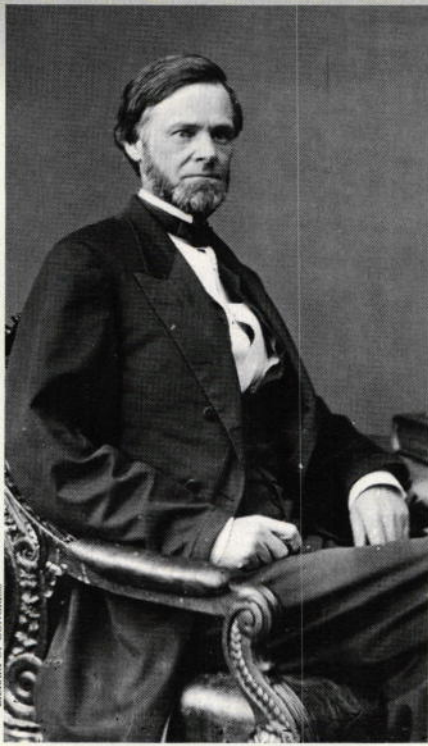
Right: Henry Halleck, one of many Union generals whose conciliatory policies angered those northerners who called for harsher measures against the South.

peared to sanction forage, which was in essence the military practice of subsisting on the enemy's land and crops. But neither the *Transcript* nor most other newspapers of the period explained the differences between forage, confiscation, and plunder. Presumably, confiscation could only follow the enactment of specific legislation and would transfer ownership of private property to the federal government. In the meantime, there were few clear guidelines or precedents in place for Union army commanders to follow. Plunder, as opposed to forage, was defined as wanton looting and implied inflicting personal bodily harm on enemy civilians. Plunder would result in transfer of private property to unruly soldiers—not to the Union government. General Henry Halleck's treatise on the international rules of warfare, published in May 1861, deplored such practices as extensive foraging and plunder. According to Mark Grimsley, Halleck's *International Law* supported the government's policy of conciliation. Early in the war, when many Union army officers still adhered to conciliatory policies, the enlisted men nevertheless occasionally helped themselves illegally to private rebel prop-



erty through foraging. By late 1861 Confederate civilians had begun fleeing farther southward or westward with their possessions and their slaves, sometimes abandoning their plantations to the advancing Federals. Some officers seized public property, but on the whole they pursued a lenient course against rebel civilians, and severely punished vandalism or theft. Many Union soldiers, however, rejected conciliatory policies by early 1862, both toward rebel civilians' property and toward their slaves. A Major Connolly told his wife that he had degenerated from a “conservative young Democrat to a horse stealer and ‘nigger thief’” and that while he was in the field, he was an “abolitionist.” By July of that year, Major General John Pope had already declared a policy, which was sanctioned by Lincoln, of subsisting “upon the country” in Virginia. In fact, Pope forced all residents in the area under his





Ohio senator John Sherman.

command to sign loyalty oaths in order to avoid the confiscation of their property, which in 1862 was still an innovation among Union army commanders. Eventually Francis Lieber would publish General Orders No. 100 for the U.S. Army, which strictly forbade plundering, defined as the lawless looting of private enemy property.<sup>14</sup>

However senior military officers might have reacted to plunder, the home front viewed these actions pragmatically. When newspapers inveighed against the practice of plundering, they rarely cited ideological reasons. The *New York Times* stated that there was “no occasion for our soldiers to plunder in order to obtain supplies of goods or clothing, for the Government adequately provides for all such wants.” Further, if soldiers were plundering for private gain, then that would be “doubly dangerous”—not because it contravened the conventions of civilized warfare or violated the Constitution, but because such a practice “not only breaks down discipline while the plundering is going on, but . . . encumbers the soldier with goods that he will divide his attention with, giving so much less to his main business in the field—that of fighting.” Another editorial later that summer further reinforced the paper’s realistic attitude toward the victims of foraging raids. The *New York Times* sought to reassure its readers that

even though the editor thought plundering ought to be “strictly punished,” northern citizens need not fear that the Union army “will not sufficiently desolate the rebel territory.” An army, he claimed, was like a flock of locusts “even to its friends.” While it is true that most northerners—when pressed—said that plunder was an unchivalrous act, not befitting a moral army, they were less troubled by the lack of legality or morality than by its potentially subversive effect on the soldiers themselves.<sup>15</sup>

Regardless of their squeamishness about the plunder of private citizens, militant northerners nearly always targeted individual southerners rather than the rebel states (let alone the Confederate government) in their angry rhetoric. Legal theorist George Ticknor Curtis pointed out that because states could not legally secede, the war would have to be waged against individual rebels. This was certainly in keeping with northern public opinion on the treatment of enemy citizens. Union citizens had felt personally attacked when secessionists seized federal forts and other properties in early 1861, and they continued to inveigh against individual rebels who remained in arms against their government. Therefore, northerners recognized that they had to distinguish between the guilt of the leaders and the guilt of the southern people, whom they considered “dupes.” The *Springfield* (Massachusetts) *Daily Republican* said that while the rebels should be forced to pay for the cost of the war, it was of the first importance to make a “wise discrimination” between rebel leaders and the duped masses. Indeed, the word “dupe” was one of the most common epithets applied to nonslaveholding southerners. In February 1862 the *New York Times* published an editorial entitled “The Southern People—Guilty or Not Guilty.” The *Times* declared that it was important to be careful not to confound the southern people, who were the “body of the rebellion,” with the “rebel chiefs, civil and military, who have been its brain and hand.” Not that the former had not been “weak, and wicked, and guilty,” but they were bound in any case to be punished by the fortunes of war. An Ohio man was far less forgiving to southern “doops.” He submitted a petition to Senator John Sherman proposing a plan of action for the disposal of “the Trators property.” The petition

suggested that “every prominent Trator shall be Hung, & thier doops be deprived of all thier *property*, of what ever Sort.” Meanwhile, he hoped that some of the “Antiquarian *Fossels*” in the Senate could be “galvanized” to life, but doubted that this would ever occur.<sup>16</sup>

The demand for punishment of rebellious wealthy slaveowners, combined with the desire for reimbursement for the costs of the war, soon produced a coolly pragmatic view of the economic value of southern land, crops, and slave labor. Emphasizing the immense national debt the country would someday have to pay, some northern pamphlets tried to assess the likelihood that southern slaveholders’ property could be “harvested” to pay northern war costs. One pamphleteer calculated the future debt to “more than a thousand millions” of dollars. He thought that the actual value of property in the rebel states was about \$4.7 billion, “say three billion if exclusive of slavery.” He thought that if southern land and crops could be sold to pay off northern war debts, it would go “a good way” toward meeting their obligations.<sup>17</sup>

When radical Republicans in Congress and on the home front demanded the confiscation of southern land, they did so with an eye to keeping the captured real estate permanently under Union control. It was not merely to be considered war matériel for the duration of the conflict; it was to be used to safeguard the future of the Republic from future southern aggressions. One Massachusetts voter declared that there would be no peace until the Union had reconquered the land and slavery was dead. He proclaimed, “the territory of the South must be ours if we make it desolate as the cities of the plain and all its inhabitants must submit quit or swing.” An editorial in the *Chicago Tribune* also declared that the government would have to take southern real estate in order to establish a permanent peace. Otherwise, the *Tribune* predicted that the government would need a standing army to subdue the rebels “if we let them keep their lands and slaves. They will feel no gratitude.”<sup>18</sup>

But the monetary value of southern land and the benefits of the southern climate were not lost on many northern voters, especially Republicans. Even moderate Democratic newspapers—papers that had previously argued against eman-



cipation, and even against sweeping confiscation laws earlier in the war—eagerly envisioned the uses to which fertile cotton-, sugar-, and rice-growing areas could be put, as well as the profits to be earned from these crops. In scrutinizing this potential agricultural windfall, northerners also eyed the black labor force as the only way to realize the value of the southern land. For example, the *Boston Daily Evening Transcript* said that “not only will three out of four millions of enslaved blacks be emancipated, but thousands of square miles of cultivated or cultivatable plantations will be confiscated.” Although the *Transcript*’s editor regretted the “hateful necessity of total warfare,” he nevertheless declared himself willing to let it have its “full sway when the time for its natural operation shall occur.” Similarly, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* discussed various congressional solutions to the problem of what to do with freed slaves. The purpose of such legislation ought to be to “avoid the expense of supporting crowds of slaves in idleness, and furnishing the American mills with cotton.” The *Inquirer* explained that there were more than twenty million acres of southern land, “of unsurpassed fertility, capable of producing about fifteen millions of bales of cotton per annum,” subject to military confiscation. An editorial in the *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer* also suggested that land could be found in Florida for the freed slaves, “all of whom can find congenial homes in its hot climate and fertile lands, the extent of which is amply sufficient.” In no way did this paper suggest giving the land to the slaves; the point was to confiscate the land and “apprentice” the freed slaves to cultivate it (which would not include paying them a wage for their labor). This editorial reveals the disparity between home front and political opinions on harsh war ideas. The *Enquirer* was a staunch Democratic paper that had supported Stephen A. Douglas’ candidacy in the 1860 election; by contrast, such ideas would not become prominent in Congress, not even among radicals like Thaddeus Stevens and Benjamin F. Wade, until late 1863, after the Union army had achieved significant victories at Vicksburg and Gettysburg.<sup>19</sup>

Above all, the confiscation of rebel lands would bring about the Americanization of the South. Confiscated southern lands could be used to promote the northern principles of free white labor



FRANK & MARIE T. WOOD PRINT COLLECTION

Above: Northern citizens were not beyond waging their own harsh war against those thought to be disloyal. In this sketch, an angry mob in Haverhill, Massachusetts, parades the tarred-and-feathered editor of a local pro-Confederate newspaper through town.

Right: Michigan senator Zachariah Chandler.

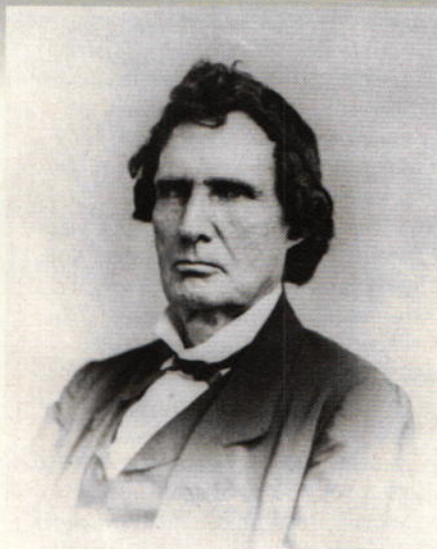
and enterprise. Northern newspapers had speculated on the wealth and beauty of some of the southern states since the secession crisis. For example, the *New York Times* had been publishing opinions since the outbreak of the war recommending “universal confiscation” of real estate so that loyal settlers could occupy southern lands. As early as April 1861, before Virginia had even joined the Confederacy, the *New York Tribune* had already carried editorials extolling Virginia’s lovely climate and fertile lands. The *Tribune* had likened the state to a garden but predicted that it was “doomed to be a good deal trampled, and its paths, its beds, and its boundaries are likely to be pretty completely obliterated before we have done with it.” The editorial cast a greedy eye on Virginia’s property “in houses, in lands, in mines, in forests, in country, and in town,” which doubtless would have to “be taken possession of.” All this was perfectly fair because, according to the *Tribune*, the “worn-out and emasculated First Families must give place to a sturdier people, whose pioneers are now on their way to Washington at this moment in regiments.” Certainly, an allotment of Virginia farmland would be a “fitting reward to the brave fellows who have gone to fight their country’s battles.”<sup>20</sup>



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Similarly, the *New York Times* proposed “sending all rebel inhabitants further South, and occupying their houses with our soldiers.” An 1863 pamphlet in favor of confiscation also recommended “opening the lands of the South to free white labor [and] arming friendly troops, of every color, creed and clime.” In the same vein, the *Springfield (Massachusetts) Daily Republican* published a revealing editorial entitled “The Americanization of the South.” This editorial quoted from an article that had appeared in *DeBow’s Review* on the perils of peace, the danger of “an immense Yankee immigration” into the border states, and the necessity of protecting the South from such an invasion. But the *Republican*’s editor believed that should the rebels succeed in dividing the Union, no “Chinese wall . . . would wholly protect the South from [a] peaceful Yankee invasion.” In fact, after the restoration of peace, “tens of thousands of industrious and enterprising men from the North and West”





Ohio senator Benjamin F. Wade (left) and Pennsylvania congressman Thaddeus Stevens.

would soon discover the “advantages of the soil, climate and position, and the rich but undeveloped resources of these great border states.” These vigorous northern men would soon “make their desolate places bud and blossom, and supplant their present sluggishness and poverty by industry and thrift.” Further, a large portion of the land in Texas ought to be confiscated, because the nation had a “double and triple claim upon the soil of this most ungrateful of states.” The Texan lands should be distributed to Union army volunteers. In this way the South would “get that infusion of new blood which it needs to secure its renovation.” While such opinions were being published in the North, however, the southern press carried similar warnings about the northern invaders; the rebels were equally convinced that a Yankee invasion would corrupt and defile southern civilization.<sup>21</sup>

During the secession crisis, the rebellious states had been called “erring sisters”; now that the bitterness of war tainted the feeling of kinship between the sections, northerners still viewed the southern states as feminine, but began to cast them in a less familial role. In their eagerness to conquer and reform southern lands, some editorials portrayed the South as a beautiful, desirable, but corrupt woman, one who could only be reformed by the application of the stern masculine authority of northern values. For example, the *New York Times* published a favorable opinion on a proposed congressional bill that provided for the sale of confiscated lands and encouraged Union soldiers in the army to purchase the land. In this way, according to the

*Times*, “a new element” was likely to be introduced into the war, which would “regenerate the South.” Northern soldiers, more used to the “rugged soil” and “inhospitable climate” of their native states, would be “captivated by the beautiful regions” of the South and eager to become their “owners and occupiers.” Such a development was inevitable, the editorial claimed, and would have occurred even if there had never been a war. According to the *Times*, the South would soon be “overrun and overpowered by the more prolific loins and stronger muscles and wills of the North.” This was nothing more than the law of “superior forces when brought in contact with inferior.” Echoing Senator Charles Sumner’s famous 1856 “The Crime Against Kansas” speech, northern editorials focused on the metaphoric and literal sexual impurity of slaveowning southerners (and by implication, of the southern states) as a justification for a manly Yankee invasion. The “sister” metaphor was no longer appropriate after the emergence of the language of conquest, surrender, and redemption through a “peaceful invasion.”<sup>22</sup>

Sometimes such sentiments verged on the vindictive, evoking images of violation and rape. In August 1862 Michigan senator Zachariah Chandler received a letter from an officer who commented with some satisfaction that it was “dreadful to behold the state of prostration” under which the state of Virginia, which he called “the Eden of America,” was now laboring. According to this officer, the “hard hand of war” was strikingly visible in all “her fertile valleys,” and Virginia’s crops, which had hitherto promised “an

abundant harvest for the support of treason,” were now “trampled under foot by those whose lives are pledged to support our free & glorious Constitution.” The beautiful, warm climate of the South, which had corrupted the idle slaveowners, would have only a beneficial effect on the hard-working sons of the North. A Yankee invasion, therefore, would effectively redeem not only the South, but also reinvigorate the entire nation. A *New York Times* editorial declared that the war would accomplish in a single generation what might otherwise have required centuries in peacetime. In fact, America’s Civil War would become the “grand agency in the cause of civilization, which only proceeds by the better supplanting the worse, and often by destroying it.” In this way, the Union army would bring superior northern culture, values, and racial characteristics to the corrupt, benighted South.<sup>23</sup>

Militant northerners had begun to express hard war ideas quite early in the war—some time, in fact, before the Union army’s higher command sanctioned such policies as extensive forage, martial law, and the refusal to return fugitive slaves to their owners. Among the northern home front, these harsh ideas arose from rage against the southern rebellion and its authors, from frustrations with the defeats and delays of the Peninsular Campaign, and from a growing dissatisfaction with congressional debates over the constitutionality of punitive actions. They demanded assaults on the property of private citizens; they argued for the harsh treatment of enemy civilians; and they advocated a thorough and unstinting reformation of southern culture and civilization. The only way to achieve a decisive military victory and permanently restore the Union and the Constitution was to bring the war home to rebel civilians. □

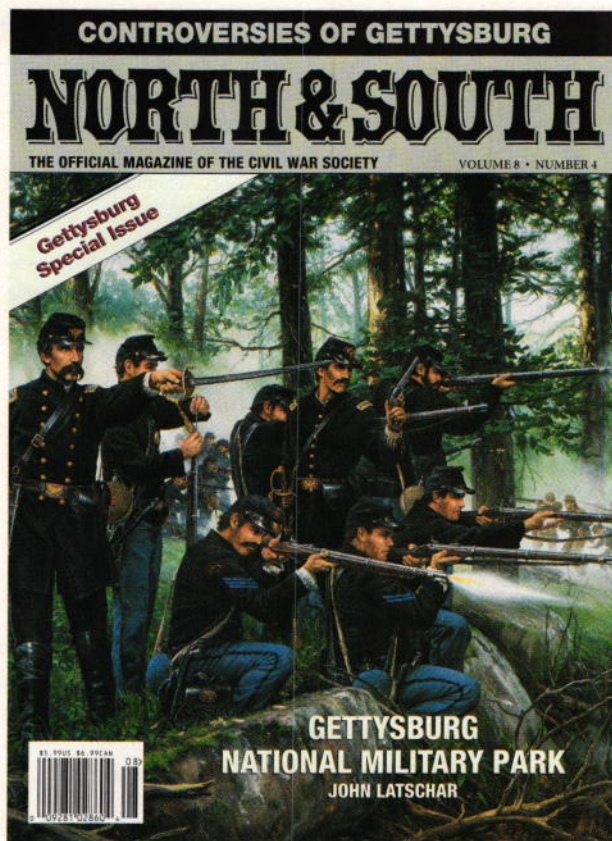
**SILVANA R. SIDDALI** is Assistant Professor of History at Saint Louis University in St. Louis, Missouri, where she teaches courses in nineteenth century political and constitutional history, including the Civil War and Reconstruction. This article is based on her recently released book *From Property to Person: Slavery and the Confiscation Acts, 1861-1862* (Louisiana State University Press, 2005). She is currently at work on a second book, which examines antebellum state constitutions in the Old Northwest.



# NOTES:

1. All quotations appear exactly as in the original. The anecdote about the young Ohio lady was recounted in a letter by Edwin B. Nugent to Israel Washburn, Israel Washburn Papers, Library of Congress Manuscripts Division (hereafter LOC), September 11, 1862; Tilson Aldritch to Elihu Washburne, Elihu B. Washburne Papers, LOC, March 7, 1862; Frederick Douglass, "The State of the War," quoted in Philip S. Foner, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass: Volume III, The Civil War: 1861-1865* (New York, 1956), 209.
2. R. Buckley to John Sherman, John Sherman Papers, LOC, June 8, 1862; Sherman Blocker to John Sherman, Sherman Papers, LOC, April 23, 1862; A. B. Allen to Zachariah Chandler, Zachariah Chandler Papers, LOC, April 23, 1862.
3. A. Bleck? [signature illegible] to Elihu Washburne, Elihu B. Washburne Papers, LOC, March 12, 1862.
4. A.A. Cochran to Elihu Washburne, Elihu B. Washburne Papers, LOC; the date is missing, but the letter appears at the end of the March 1862 letter file; Sarah P. Edson to George Julian, Giddings-Julian Correspondence, LOC, May 5, 1862.
5. N.B. Yates or Gates (signature illegible) to John Sherman, Sherman Papers, LOC, March 1, 1862; *New York Evening Post*, March 5, 1862; Jesse F. Miller to Elihu Washburne, Elihu B. Washburne Papers, LOC, April 22, 1862.
6. *Boston Daily Evening Transcript*, December 20, 1861; Democratic State Central Committee, Indiana, *Facts for the People! Relating to the Present Crisis. By a Citizen of Indiana*. (Indianapolis, 1862), 6; [Joel Parker], "The Character of the Rebellion, and the Conduct of the War," *North American Review*, October 1862; Roy P. Basler, ed., *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Vol. 4:531-2. For a similar view, see the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 21, 1861; Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865* (New York, 1995), 3; Robert A. Doughty et al., *The American Civil War: The Emergence of Total Warfare* (Lexington, Mass., 1996), chapters 2 and 3; Daniel E. Sutherland, *The Emergence of Total War* (Fort Worth, 1996), chapter 1.
7. Charles Janeway Stillé, *How a Free People Conduct a Long War: A Chapter from English History* (Philadelphia, 1862), reprinted in Frank Freidel, *Union Pamphlets of the Civil War* (Cambridge, 1967); Charles Royster, *The Destructive War: William Tecumseh Sherman, Stonewall Jackson, and the Americans* (New York, 1991), 353; James T. Ward, manuscript diary, LOC, entry dated December 5, 1861.
8. Sinclair Tousey, *A Businessman's Views of Public Matters* (New York, 1865), 35; for similar views, see also *Daily National Intelligencer*, March 8, 1862; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 5, 1862.
9. Calvin Fletcher, *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher*, Gayle Thornbrough, Dorothy L. Riker and Paula Corpuz, eds. (Indianapolis, 1980), entry for March 6, 1862, Vol. 7:367; *Chicago Tribune*, March 5, 1862; unidentified newspaper clipping, enclosed in a letter written by F. B. Hubbell, editor of the *Daily Whig* (Kentucky) to Robert J. Breckinridge, Breckinridge Family Papers, LOC, May 28, 1862; John C. Breckinridge to Robert J. Breckinridge, Breckinridge Family Papers, LOC, September 14, 1862. This is not the disloyal former senator John C. Breckinridge, but rather a Unionist relative bearing the same name.
10. John Auston Stevens Jr., *Proceedings at the Mass Meeting of Loyal Citizens, on Union Square, New-York, 15th Day of July, 1862* (New York, 1862), 28. For a similar view, see George Templeton Strong, *The Diary of George Templeton Strong, 1835-1875*. Allan Nevins and Milton H. Thomas, eds. (New York, 1952), entry dated November 28, 1861, 193; Michael Holt, "Abraham Lincoln and the Politics of Union," in John L. Thomas, ed., *Abraham Lincoln and the American Political Tradition* (Amherst, Mass., 1986), 130; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York, 1988), 562.
11. P. A. Allaire, M.D., to Lyman Trumbull, Trumbull Papers, LOC, December 10, 1861; Frederick Hecker, to Elihu Washburne, Elihu B. Washburne Papers, LOC, December 9, 1861; Wait Talcott to Elihu Washburne, Elihu B. Washburne Papers, LOC, January 18, 1862; *Boston Daily Evening Transcript*, July 19, 1862.
12. *Chicago Tribune*, May 12, 1862; *New York Times*, May 15, 1862.
13. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 2, 1862; *Boston Daily Evening Transcript*, August 20, 1862; *Springfield (Mass.) Daily Republican*, May 21, 1862; for similar views, see also the *Louisville Daily Democrat*, September 4, 1861.
14. Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill, 1995), 28-32, 57; *Boston Daily Evening Transcript*, July 23, 1862, quoted in Ash, 150, 54; Harold M. Hyman, *Era of the Oath: Northern Loyalty Tests during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York, 1978), 35. The Adjutant General's Office published Francis Lieber's General Orders No. 100 in 1863. See, Francis Lieber, *Instructions for the Government of Armies of the United States, in the Field prepared by Francis Lieber; and revised by a board of Officers* (New York, 1863).
15. *New York Times*, May 31, July 25, 1862.
16. Michael Les Benedict, "A Constitutional Crisis," in James McPherson and William J. Cooper, Jr., eds. *Writing the Civil War: The Quest to Understand* (Columbia, S.C., 1998), 157; *New York Times*, February 19, 1862; A. Denny to John Sherman, Sherman Papers, LOC, February 21, 1862.
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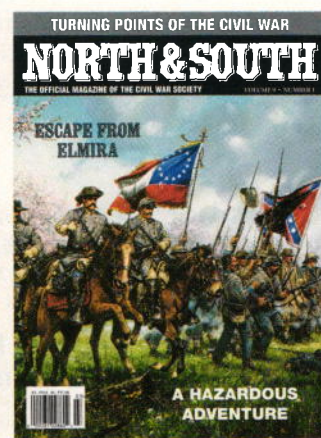
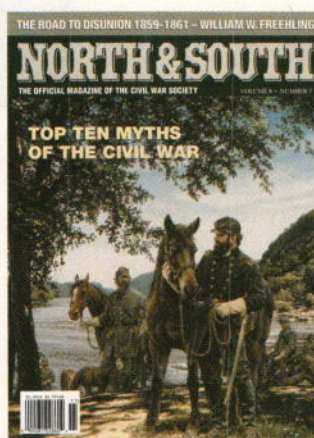
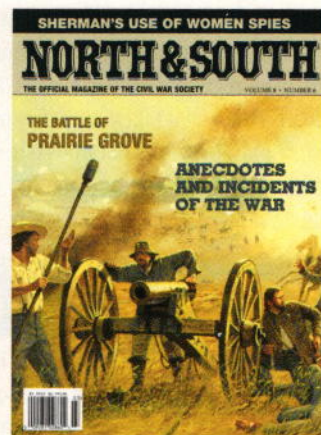
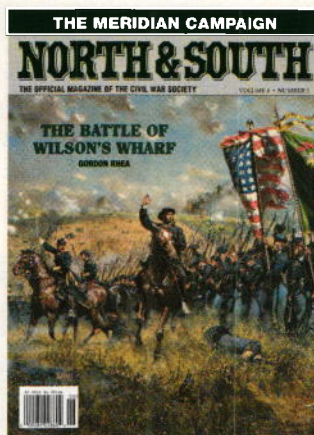
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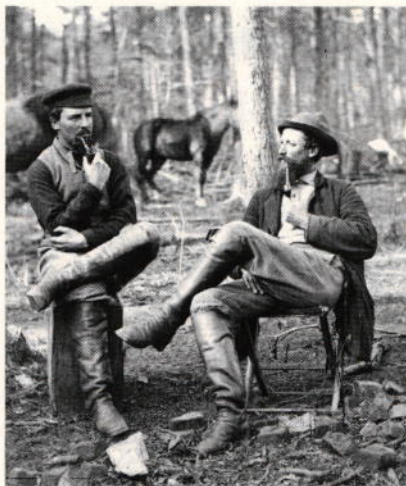
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# THE BATTLE OF SELMA, APRIL 1865

*"The most remarkable achievement in the history of modern cavalry."*

**BY JANUARY 1865** the only vital sector of the Confederacy to have escaped the heavy hand of war was a belt that stretched from central Mississippi to central Georgia. Within this region were to be found the cities of Selma, Alabama, and Columbus, Georgia, two major industrial centers still able to contribute to the moribund Confederate cause. Of these two, Selma had been a target as early as October 1864, when Major General William T. Sherman suggested to Major General George H. Thomas that a cavalry raid into the interior of Alabama would be a productive enterprise. And General Ulysses S. Grant, too, had seen both Selma and Tuscaloosa as objectives worth pursuing. However, during that fall of 1864, Thomas, theatre commander in Sherman's absence, was largely preoccupied in turning back Confederate general John Bell Hood's invasion of Middle Tennessee. The near total destruction of Hood's army at Nashville in December 1864, and the collapse of the one-legged Hood's ill-conceived campaign to reach the Ohio River, left Grant, Sherman, and Thomas now free to think in terms of an offensive movement south of the Tennessee River.<sup>1</sup>

The Selma strategy had been coalescing for some time, so that the precise origin of its authorization is not entirely clear. In January 1865, from far-off Savannah, Sherman wrote to Thomas directing him to send an army of 25,000, including Wilson's cavalry, against Selma and Tuscaloosa. If largely unopposed, Sherman thought this force might then move on Montgomery. Grant had thoughts along the same lines. His two-year-long effort to mount a campaign against Mobile was, it seemed, finally going to bear fruit, and a diversionary strike against Selma would draw pressure off the Mobile force.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, as authorization for a strike south was being considered and discussed, Major General James Harrison Wilson, commanding the newly organized CCMDM (Cavalry Corps, Military Division of the Mississippi), was anxiously anticipating orders for a spring campaign. Following the Battle of Nashville, in which his cavalry corps played a stellar role, Wilson had collected his regiments in cantonments along the north bank of the Tennessee River, between Waterloo and Gravelly Springs, Alabama, and Eastport, Mississippi. Here, his horsemen underwent reorganization and refitting, in preparation for a southward movement.<sup>3</sup>

On February 14 Grant wired Thomas to prepare "as much of a cavalry force as you can spare and hold it in readiness to move south." The commanding general had three objectives in mind: first, to engage enemy forces in that area as much as possible, so as to weaken Confederate opposition to Brigadier General Edward R.S. Canby's campaign against Mobile; second, to smash the enemy's lines of communication and military resources in the area; and third, to destroy or capture any Confederate forces in the field. As Grant saw it, these goals could best be achieved by focusing on the cities of Selma and Tuscaloosa, and he thought a force of five thousand cavalry would be sufficient to get the job done. Thomas replied the same day that he could put ten thousand cavalry in the field.<sup>4</sup>

Ten was better than five, perhaps, but Wilson wanted to use his entire corps, which at the moment consisted of seven divisions of horse, some twenty-seven thousand men, twenty thousand of whom were mounted. The young cavalry leader believed that the horses needed to mount the balance of his command

could be had if the authorities in Washington, namely Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and Major General Henry Wager Halleck, army chief of staff, pursued a more aggressive policy in obtaining them.<sup>5</sup>

At the end of February Thomas visited the cavalry cantonments to inform Wilson that his Seventh Division was to be sent to General Canby and the Sixth Division was to remain in Middle Tennessee to deal with rampant guerrilla activity. But Wilson was determined to make as much of the moment as he could. He put on a show for Thomas, and the "Rock of Chickamauga" was suitably impressed by the splendid sight of 17,000 troopers passing in review. And Wilson himself was more than a little persuasive in convincing Thomas that there was more to be gained if he was allowed to take his entire available force, rather than simply making a demonstration on behalf of Canby's effort. Thomas thought so, too, and authorized Wilson to take his entire command. Grant agreed and further stipulated that Wilson should have all the "latitude of an independent commander."<sup>6</sup>

Grant had hoped that Wilson would be underway by early March, but heavy and incessant rains had the Tennessee River out of its banks, making crossing impossible. As a consequence, it was not until March 22 that Wilson was able to get three divisions of his cavalry corps across the river and moving south. Last minute deletions left Wilson with only

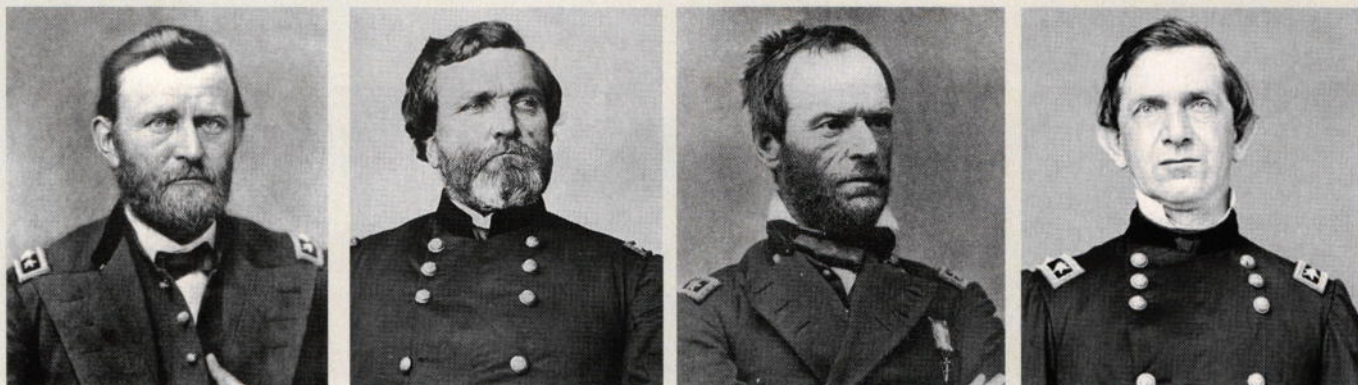
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Right: Detail from Don Stivers' "Wilson's Charge," which depicts the assault of Union general James Harrison Wilson and his troopers against the Selma defenses. For more information on this and other paintings by the artist, visit [www.donstivers.com](http://www.donstivers.com).









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Left to right: General Ulysses S. Grant, Major General George H. Thomas, General William T. Sherman, and Brigadier General Edward R.S. Canby.

three fully mounted divisions—the First, Second, and Fourth. The Third Division had accompanied Sherman on the March to the Sea and the Fifth was left behind for want of horses.<sup>7</sup>

Although Wilson was disappointed at not being able to take his entire corps, it was, nevertheless, a formidable force that he led south from the Tennessee River. The First Division, commanded by Brigadier General Edward Moody McCook, numbered 4,096 men, the Second, under Brigadier General Eli Long, 5,127, and the Fourth, led by the dynamic Brevet Major General Emory Upton, 3,923. Of these, 11,980 (including Wilson's 334-man escort) were mounted. Some 1,500 dismounted troopers taken from the three divisions accompanied the corps wagon train. It was hoped that these men could be remounted on horses picked up en route. Finally, there was a complement of fifty medical officers and a 211-man detachment of pontoniers, together with Wilson's 334-man escort. Wilson retained hope that Brigadier General Edward Hatch's fine Fifth Division could be remounted in time to rejoin the corps before the campaign ended.<sup>8</sup>

James Harrison Wilson was one of the boy generals of the Civil War, and arguably the most accomplished. Born in Shawneetown, Illinois, he graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1860, sixth in his class. After a year's tour in the Pacific Northwest, he hastened east to participate in the war. Brash, cocky, and outspoken to a fault, he was nevertheless a gifted organizer and able soldier, who rose rapidly through the ranks. Assigned to the western theatre in 1863, he quickly became a personal favorite of Grant's and a member of the general's military family. Promoted to brevet brigadier general

early in 1864, Wilson assumed charge of the Cavalry Bureau in Washington, and within two months brought that agency to a higher degree of efficiency than hitherto. In April he took command of Major General Philip Sheridan's Third Cavalry Division, which he led throughout that spring and summer. Although his record during the period reflected his lack of experience as a cavalry commander, Wilson learned quickly, and when Grant was searching for an able officer to command Sherman's horsemen, he chose Wilson, who joined Sherman in the field just as the latter was preparing for his March to the Sea. Given carte blanche by Sherman, Wilson proceeded with his corps organization and moved on to Nashville to assist Thomas in turning back Hood.<sup>9</sup>

With the exception of Emory Upton, Wilson's principal subordinates were veteran horse soldiers. Edward M. McCook, one of the famed "Fighting McCooks" of Ohio, was a lieutenant of cavalry in the regular army and by April 1864 was a brevet brigadier general of volunteers. He served in the western theatre throughout the war, his track record as a cavalry commander good if not particularly noteworthy.<sup>10</sup>

Kentucky-born Eli Long had served in the cavalry on the Western frontier prior to the outbreak of the Civil War. Following the Battle of Murfreesboro he was appointed colonel of the 4th Ohio Cavalry, and in August 1864 was promoted brigadier general. A resolute, if not particularly imaginative, commander, Wilson once described Long as being "still as the breeze, but dreadful as the storm."<sup>11</sup>

Like Wilson, Emory Upton was a West Point graduate and another of the

war's boy generals. Two years Wilson's junior, Upton was but twenty-five at the time of the Selma Campaign and had distinguished himself in some of the war's severest fighting, notably at Pennsylvania's "Bloody Angle" in May 1864. After Upton's recovery from a near-fatal wound at Opequon, Wilson requested his services for his new cavalry corps, despite the fact that he lacked experience in the mounted arm. Upton, however, had proved his soldierly capabilities in both the infantry and artillery, and would round out his service as a cavalryman with Wilson. An able and gifted soldier, his legacy to American military thought and policy extended far beyond his own brief lifetime. Wilson considered him "an incomparable soldier."<sup>12</sup>

★ ★ ★

#### ONCE ACROSS THE MUDDY AND RAIN-SWOLLEN TENNESSEE RIVER,

Wilson struck south in three separate columns, hoping to confuse the Confederates as to his primary objective. Fortunately for Wilson's horsemen, Confederate lieutenant general Nathan Bedford Forrest and his immediate superior, General Richard "Dick" Taylor, hesitated in reacting, due to the presence of a second Union column marching west from Pensacola, Florida, in support of Canby's Mobile operation. However, once having concluded that Wilson's command posed the more serious threat, Forrest, the bane of every Federal commander in the West, moved with his customary vigor and promptness.<sup>13</sup>

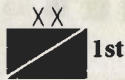
Unfortunately for the Confederate cause, this delay—although understandable given the circumstances—allowed Wilson to get the jump on Forrest by a couple of very important days. Had



# Organization of the Federal Cavalry Corps



**Major General James H. Wilson**  
(Escort: 4th U.S. Cavalry)



**Major General Edward M. McCook**  
(4,096 Men)

## 1st Brigade

**Brigadier General John T. Croxton**

8th Iowa  
4th Kentucky Mounted Infantry  
6th Kentucky  
2nd Michigan

## 2nd Brigade

**Colonel Oscar H. LaGrange**

2nd Indiana (one battalion)  
4th Indiana  
4th Kentucky  
7th Kentucky  
1st Wisconsin

Indiana Light, 18th Battery



**Brigadier General Eli Long**  
(5,127 Men)

## 1st Brigade

**Colonel Abram Miller**

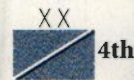
98th Illinois  
123rd Illinois  
17th Indiana  
72nd Indiana

## 2nd Brigade

**Colonel Robert H.G. Minty**

4th Michigan  
3rd Ohio  
4th Ohio  
7th Pennsylvania

Illinois Light, Chicago  
Board of Trade Battery



**Major General Emory Upton**  
(3,923 Men)

## 1st Brigade

**Brigadier General Edward F. Winslow**

3rd Iowa  
4th Iowa  
10th Missouri

## 2nd Brigade

**Brigadier General Andrew J. Alexander**

5th Iowa  
1st Ohio  
7th Ohio

4th U.S. Artillery, Battery I

= cavalry; = horse artillery;  
XXX = corps; XX = division; I = battery

Forrest been able to marshal his forces in time to oppose Wilson while the latter's three separated columns were moving south through the mountainous region of northern Alabama, it could have created serious problems for the Federals. But as it was, Wilson gained three precious days, and by March 31 the three Federal divisions (now reunited) were poised to strike Selma, having crossed three major rivers, destroyed the industrial capacity of Elyton (present Birmingham), and bested Forrest himself at Ebenezer Church, some twenty-five miles north of Selma.<sup>14</sup>

Throughout the course of this young campaign, Wilson had been singularly blessed. First, he had managed to get the jump on Forrest, an edge not many of his contemporaries could claim. Granted this had been largely due to Forrest's and Taylor's uncertainty as to which threat to address first, but however the thing came about, it worked in Wilson's favor. Then the Federals were blessed a second time when they captured a courier carrying dispatches to General William Hicks "Red" Jackson detailing Forrest's plans and the disposition of his command. Finally, and perhaps the brightest of all blessings, near Plantersville Upton's men

captured an English civil engineer named Millington, who had been employed on the Selma fortifications. Having become disenchanted with the Confederate cause, he came over to Upton's lines and offered to tell all he knew about the city's defenses, even going so far as to prepare pencil sketches. The gods in charge of such things seemed to smile brightly on young Wilson and his horsemen.<sup>15</sup>

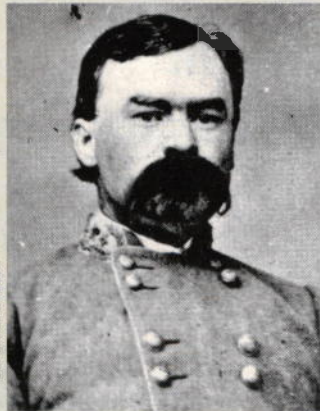
Despite having been given an insight into Forrest's plans and movements, as well as a detailed picture of Selma's defenses, the city remained a concern for Wilson. Millington's sketches made it abundantly clear that the city was strongly fortified. Forrest would likely be conducting the defense, but how many defenders and how much artillery he had were not known. And while he pondered these questions, Wilson had also to bear in mind that two of Forrest's divisions, under Jackson and General James Ronald Chalmers, posed a definite threat. Jackson, he knew, was west of the Cahaba River and would be pushing to get across that watercourse and reach Selma. Brigadier General Frank C. Armstrong's brigade of Chalmers' division had been at Ebenezer Church and was now inside the Selma works with Forrest, but where ex-

actly the rest of Chalmers' division was at the moment remained unclear. Even as Wilson considered this, however, the able Chalmers was pressing toward Selma from the southwest, and Forrest could only hope he would reach Selma in time to be of service.<sup>16</sup>

Back at Elyton Brigadier General John T. Croxton's brigade of McCook's division had been detached and sent on to Tuscaloosa to destroy the military potential of that city. Through the captured courier, Wilson learned that Croxton had had a brush with Jackson, but beyond that he knew nothing. Uncertainty is sometimes the most vexing of adversaries and Wilson was more than a little uneasy over the whereabouts of both Croxton and Jackson. Accordingly, McCook, with his second brigade under Colonel Oscar H. LaGrange, had been sent across the Cahaba to try and open contact with Croxton and destroy the bridge at Centreville.<sup>17</sup>

Wilson, Long, and Upton huddled during the night of April 1, pouring over Millington's sketches. Although having such a clear and complete picture of the enemy's position was an incredible advantage, Wilson remained concerned about the challenge facing them because,





Left to right: Major General James Harrison Wilson, Brigadier General Eli Long, General William Hicks "Red" Jackson, and Lieutenant General Nathan Bedford Forrest.

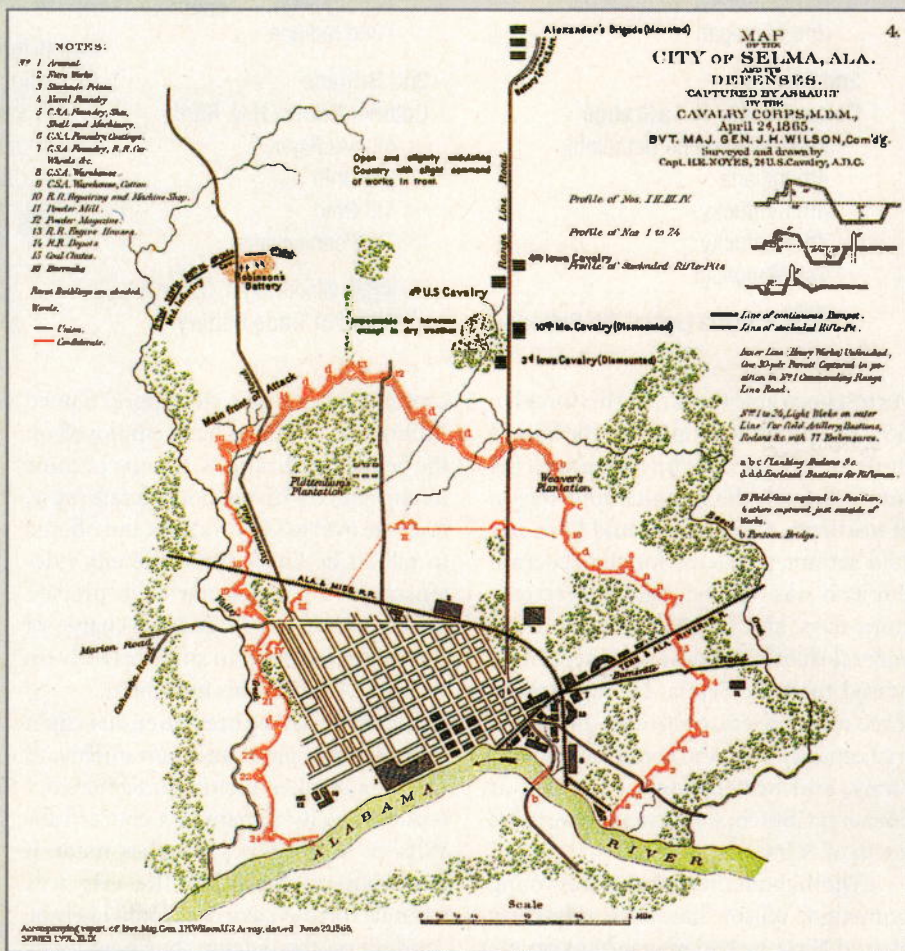
with the exception of Upton, none of his unit commanders had any experience in assaulting a fortified position. Wilson accordingly drew heavily on Upton's knowledge and experience in that regard.<sup>18</sup>

Out of the discussion a tentative plan emerged. The attack would be made under cover of darkness. Long's division, the heavier by two regiments, would attack from the northwest, down the Summerfield Road, while Upton's assault would come from the north along the Range Line or Plantersville Road, through a swampy area east of the city. Upton was also directed to send a squadron to cover the Burnsville Road, which entered the city from the east.

As a part of the overall plan Lieutenant Joseph Rendlebrock, with a battalion of Wilson's escort, the Fourth Regulars, was directed to follow the Alabama & Mississippi Railroad as far as Burnsville, burning stations, bridges, and trestles. The signal for the assault was to be a single cannon shot from Lieutenant George B. Rodney's Battery I, Fourth U.S. Artillery, fired as soon as Upton was in position.<sup>19</sup>

Wilson resumed the advance at daylight on April 2, with Long's division advancing along the Summerfield Road, followed closely by Upton's division, marching via the Range Line Road. During the approach march, Wilson conferred with Long and his two brigade commanders, Colonels Robert Horatio George Minty and Abram O. Miller. Just as he had done prior to the Battle of Nashville, Wilson wanted to make certain that the key commanders understood their roles in the overall scheme of the attack.<sup>20</sup>

Long's division arrived in front of the southwest quarter of the Selma defenses



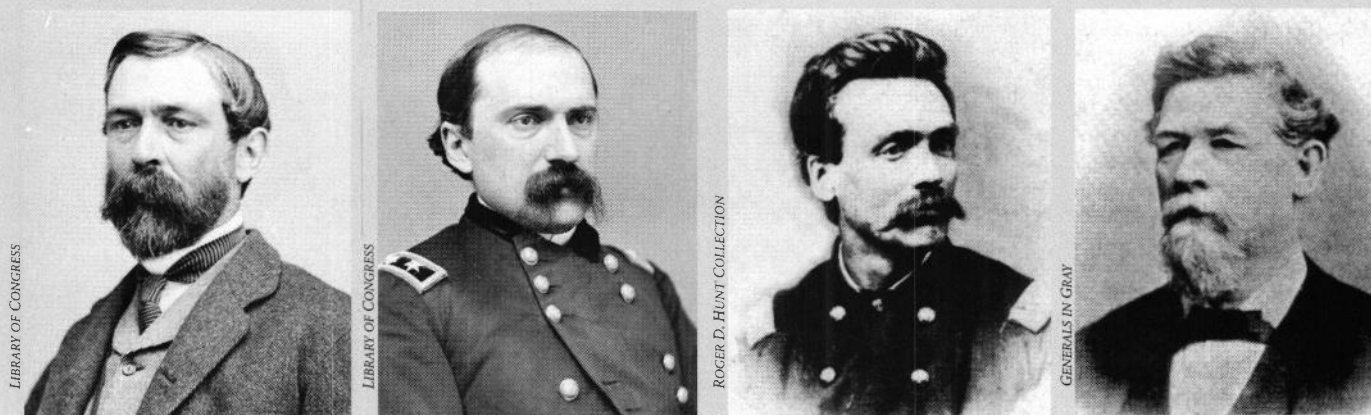
about 3:00 p.m. As Long surveyed the Confederate works, the defenders opened up with artillery, maintaining a steady fire to which the Federal batteries responded. The duel, wrote William Forse Scott, adjutant of the 4th Iowa, made "mighty noises with wicked whistling of missiles though as yet without any serious effect in that part of the field."<sup>21</sup>

After looking over Selma's defenses, Long advised Wilson that he did not believe his single division was strong

enough to carry the works, and suggested instead that if Upton's division were formed up behind his, Long himself would lead the assault. But Wilson elected to stick with his original plan.<sup>22</sup>

Selma's defenses might well have given pause to a commander who had it in mind to breach them. Situated on a three-mile-wide open plain along the north bank of the Alabama River, the city was accessed by four principal roads: the Burnsville Road from the east, the Plantersville or Range Line Road from the





Left to right: General Richard "Dick" Taylor, Brigadier General Edward Moody McCook, Colonel Oscar H. LaGrange, and Brigadier General Philip D. Roddey.

north, the Summerfield Road from the northwest, and the Marion-Cahaba Road from the west.

It was one thing to study a set of sketches—accurate though they might be—and quite another to confront the defenses depicted first hand. The city was protected by a dual line of fortifications. An irregular, horseshoe-shaped outer line of works, anchored on the river, encircled the city for approximately four miles from flank to flank. Twenty-four stockaded bastions, designed to accommodate two to three pieces of artillery, were located at strategic intervals around the perimeter of this outer line. The bastions were connected by a line of entrenchments supported by redans (flanking platforms for artillery). The stout ramparts, or walls, of this line, ranging in thickness from ten to fifteen feet at the base, rose to a height of eight to twelve feet. The earthworks themselves were fronted by a deep, water-filled ditch and a five-foot-high stockade.

The section of the outer line extending east from the Range Line Road around to the river had not been constructed as strongly as the remainder because of its proximity to the swamp, which, it was believed, would discourage any attacker. Running through this swampy area and roughly parallel to the line of outer works was a small stream named Bench Creek. Although the wet, spongy nature of the ground precluded its use by horses, there were several thickets and groves of trees well suited to the concealment of dismounted troops.

A second, inner line of defense extended east in a smaller semi-circle from approximately where the Marion-Cahaba Road entered the city to a junc-

tion with the outer line just north of the Burnsville Road. This inner line, as yet unfinished, featured four heavy redoubts designed to hold large guns, one of which was a big 30-pounder Parrott calculated to wreak havoc on advancing troops. Overall, the Selma defenses contained thirty-two field pieces positioned to cover both the Range Line and Summerfield Roads.<sup>23</sup>

General Taylor, Forrest's immediate superior, was the ranking Confederate officer on hand, but the defense of the city was conducted by Forrest, who had perhaps four thousand men all told, including two thousand veterans—Armstrong's brigade, Brigadier General Philip D. Roddey's command, and Colonel Edward Crossland's Kentuckians—the remainder militia and locals recruited for the city's defense. Armstrong's brigade was placed on the left flank, Roddey on the right, the militia in the center. Backing the militia were Forrest and his escort, together with Crossland's Kentuckians. If Forrest had had sufficient strength to man Selma's elaborate defensive fortifications fully, Wilson would have faced a far tougher challenge. But it was tough enough as it was.<sup>24</sup>

As the afternoon waned preparations for the attack moved ahead. Upton volunteered to lead a picked force of three hundred men through the swampy area east of the city. By moving against what was correctly perceived as a weak link in the Confederate line, it was thought that this force would be able to turn the enemy's right flank, while the rest of Upton's division pressed forward to take advantage of that situation.<sup>25</sup>

Long's main assault would be diagonal across the Summerfield Road.

Miller's First Brigade, composed of the 98th and 123rd Illinois, and the 17th and 72nd Indiana, formed a line on the division's right in a ravine connecting with the 3rd and 4th Ohio, the 4th Michigan, and the 7th Pennsylvania of Minty's Second Brigade. Soon after forming up, Companies G, H, F, and I of the 98th Illinois under Captain George Moutray were detached to search for a reported Confederate wagon train in the area.<sup>26</sup>

During the preparatory movement, the Chicago Board of Trade Battery was posted about 1,400 yards—three-quarters of a mile—from the Confederate works. About 4:30 p.m. Long advised battery commander Captain George Robinson that the assault was about to begin, and ordered him to conform the battery's movement to that of the general advance, rendering as much assistance as possible.<sup>27</sup>

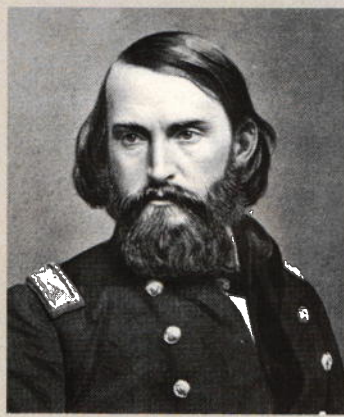
Meanwhile, as McCook and LaGrange were attempting to link with Croxton, Chalmers's division, bound for Selma, had passed through Marion, about twenty miles to the northwest, so that by the time Long and Upton reached the outskirts of the city, Chalmers was closer at hand than Wilson realized. But Long was not to be caught off guard. Anticipating just such an exigency, he had detached six companies of the 72nd Indiana of Miller's brigade to protect the division's pack train and led horses, while another five companies were assigned to picket the roads to the division's rear.<sup>28</sup>

As the Second Division formed, word reached Long that rebel cavalry (Chalmers) had attacked the pack train. Fearful that it might upset the overall timing of the assault, Long made a command decision to attack at once without





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Colonel Abram O. Miller, Brigadier General John T. Croxton, Brigadier General Frank C. Armstrong, and General James Ronald Chalmers.

waiting for the pre-arranged signal shot from Rodney's battery. Accordingly, preceded by skirmishers, the assault got underway. Two dismounted regiments—1,550 men—pressed forward across the five hundred yards separating them from the Confederate works, drawing a savage fire from both artillery and muskets. The ground was rough, with a deep ravine that had to be crossed before reaching the earthworks.<sup>29</sup>

In the forefront of the advance were Long and his two enterprising brigade commanders: Abram O. Miller, the tall, stately, former doctor turned soldier, and Robert H.G. Minty, the handsome, jaunty Irishman, a former ensign in the British army and a born cavalryman.<sup>30</sup>

As the men closed the gap they opened up with their Spencers, and within twenty-five minutes they had reached the stockade, scaled it, and forced their way over the outer works. Despite fierce resistance by Armstrong's brigade, many of whom used their muskets as clubs, Long's troopers were not to be denied. The 98th and 123rd Illinois of Miller's brigade were the first to break through, followed by the 17th Indiana. Pushing rapidly forward to exploit their success, the dismounted Union horsemen passed squads of defenders who discarded their weapons and were ordered to a collection point in the rear by Lieutenant Colonel Edward Kitchell of the 98th Illinois.<sup>31</sup>

Captain Owen Wiley of the 123rd Illinois Mounted Infantry described the moment:

[A]t General Long's "forward" the entire line started up with a bound, yelling, shooting, and all pushing forward under a most

terrific cannonade and through a perfect storm of bullets, losing officers and men at every step, until we cleared the high picket fence, crossed the ditch, and scaled the high earth-works, and planted our regimental standard first of any in the command on the works of Selma.<sup>32</sup>

As Long's men poured through the breach, Confederates posted behind the inner line of defense maintained a steady, though largely ineffective, fire. Of more concern was a possible counterattack by a body of Confederate cavalry that seemed to be forming near a saltpeter factory, a threat, however, that failed to materialize.<sup>33</sup>

The breakthrough had not been without cost. Long sustained a serious head wound that produced a severe concussion and paralysis, keeping him out of action for the remainder of the campaign. Colonel George Dobb of the 4th Ohio was killed, and Colonels Miller of the 72nd Indiana and Charles McCormick of the 7th Pennsylvania were wounded, together with three hundred enlisted men, twenty percent of the attacking force, a tribute to the tenacity of the defenders.<sup>34</sup>

The casualties sustained in the assault necessitated some changes in command. With Long out of action, control of the Second Division devolved to Minty, while Lieutenant Colonel Horace Howland, 3rd Ohio, assumed command of Minty's brigade, and Colonel Jacob G. Vail replaced Miller in charge of the First Brigade.<sup>35</sup>

Sensing that things were going their way, Wilson directed Minty to form for a fresh advance against the remaining in-

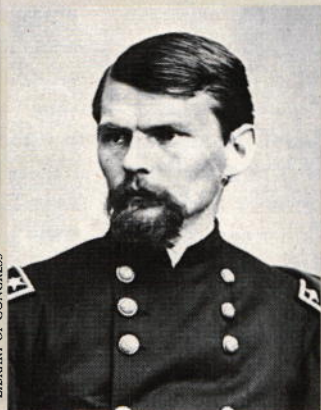
ner line of defense, where those defenders who had not surrendered had collected. A mounted charge by the 4th U.S., led by Lieutenant William O'Connell, was repulsed. Not to be denied the 4th, together with the 17th Indiana and 3rd Ohio, and supported by the Board of Trade Battery, broke through despite fierce resistance by the defenders.<sup>36</sup>

When Long launched his assault, Robinson's Board of Trade Battery had moved forward, replying in kind to the Confederate guns. Once the outer line had been breached, Robinson's field pieces were able to enfilade the enemy left, as were Long's dismounted troopers, positioned in front and to the right of Robinson. Lieutenant Trumbull D. Griffin, with a single two-gun section, tried to push forward to challenge a Confederate battery that was firing on them from the inner works, but was delayed by O'Connell's charge. By the time the jam cleared, the Federals had already secured the inner line.<sup>37</sup>

Prior to Long's assault Upton, accompanied by Sergeant Albert Loughridge of the 4th Iowa and two privates, had crept through the swamp for a closer look at the Confederate defenses. Satisfied that a force of three hundred could move through the swamp and roll up the Confederate flank, Upton was about to order this movement when heavy firing to his right indicated that Long's attack had begun.<sup>38</sup>

When Long commenced his attack, Upton's division was in the process of forming along the Range Line Road. Up front was Brigadier General Edward F. Winslow's First Brigade. A transplanted Iowan out of New England and a noted railroad builder, Winslow was another of





Left to right: Colonel Charles McCormick, Brevet Major General Emory Upton, Brigadier General Edward F. Winslow, and Colonel Robert Horatio George Minty.

the outstanding brigade commanders with whom Wilson was blessed.<sup>39</sup>

Hearing the sound of battle to their right, and sensing that Long had, for some reason unknown to them, commenced his attack prematurely, the men of the Fourth Division anticipated immediate orders to move forward. Noting that the 3rd Iowa and 10th Missouri were moving up behind him, Major William W. Woods moved his dismounted battalion of the 4th Iowa—Companies F, I, and L—forward to an advance position along Bench Creek, some four hundred yards from the enemy works.<sup>40</sup>

Shortly thereafter a courier from Wilson arrived with instructions for Upton to assault the Confederate right vigorously. Displaying the same brand of enthusiasm that characterized Long's assault, Woods' battalion rushed forward. Company F, led by Captain Newell B. Dana, supported by Companies I and L under Captains Samuel Pray and Eugene Jones, broke through the outer line, capturing a three-gun battery, but losing Captain Jones, who was shot and killed by a Confederate who had already surrendered. In the race to see who would claim the prize of capturing the big 32-pounder Parrott on the inner line of defense, men of Long's Second Division edged out those of the Fourth.<sup>41</sup>

Once the outer defenses were breached the Federal batteries under Rodney and Robinson rushed forward to pour a deadly barrage of canister and shrapnel into the retreating Confederates. Forced back to their second line, Forrest's defenders continued to offer stiff resistance, but pressure was now being applied both by Upton on the left and Minty on the right.<sup>42</sup>

The troopers of both divisions were caught up in the whirlwind of battle. Wilson himself proved no exception. Climbing aboard a fresh horse—his gray gelding "Sheridan"—Wilson directed a squadron of his escort to follow him in a charge right down the middle of the battlefield. Wilson recalled the moment:

Straight down the turnpike, through the first line of works we all rode together, every man with saber drawn and nerves strained to the utmost, as though his personal example was essential to victory, and while Long, to the right, swept over stockade, ditch, and parapet, driving Forrest and Armstrong from their outer entrenchments back upon the inner line, I found myself abreast of our dismounted men, close enough to the enemy's second line of entrenchments to hear an officer call out: "Shoot that man on the white horse." My horse fell instantly with a bullet in the breast. As he sank to the ground I threw myself from the saddle, but had hardly touched the ground before he was on his feet with his head high in the air and his eyes blazing as though they were balls of fire.<sup>43</sup>

Meanwhile, the remaining eight companies of the 4th Iowa had been ordered to dismount, but as the Confederate line crumbled under the assault, the order was countermanded and the regiment was ordered to mount and form for a charge straight down the Range Line Road. With Winslow and Lieutenant Colonel John Peters in the forefront, the regiment thundered down the road at a

gallop, in column of fours. "Like a hurricane," the horsemen tore through the gap in the outer line, capturing five pieces of artillery, plus caissons and ammunition. Pushing on, the Iowans penetrated the inner works and there found the enemy "flying in every direction," occasionally firing on the attackers, while hundreds of others threw down their weapons and surrendered. The regiment was then dispersed by company and sent in search of any remaining defenders. The 7th Ohio was sent to check the Burnsville Road, and captured four guns and one hundred twenty-five prisoners, together with numerous small arms.<sup>44</sup>

Despite an obstinate defense by Forrest, the Federals poured through the inner line, driving the defenders back into the city. Many cried out that they were conscripts and begged not to be butchered.<sup>45</sup> "The troops," wrote Wilson, "inspired by the wildest enthusiasm, swept everything before them and penetrated the city in all directions."<sup>46</sup> In this dark night of Selma's soul, amid the tumult of battle, Forrest and Armstrong, with the remnants of their commands, escaped west along the Burnsville Road. General Taylor barely managed to escape aboard a fired-up engine that was standing by.<sup>47</sup>

The men of the Cavalry Corps were ecstatic. "We never saw our boys so wrought up with the excitement of battle and the unrestrained joy of victory. They laughed, they shouted, they clapped their hands for joy! Comrades met clasped hands, wept, and blessed God that so many of us were safe."<sup>48</sup>

Pandemonium reigned in the fallen city. Fires broke out and vandals plundered businesses and homes. Wilson set up headquarters in the Gee Hotel and



promptly established a provost guard. The staff was directed to assist local citizenry in restoring order and bringing the fires under control.<sup>49</sup>

It is difficult to determine how much plundering was done by the Federals, but Wilson admitted that some of his troopers were undoubtedly guilty, and one report described how the "Union Army became a perfect mob, breaking open the saloons and stores, taking anything they wanted, and then setting the city on fire, burning the entire waterfront and nearly all of one side of Broad Street, including the Episcopal Church."<sup>50</sup>

The citizens of Selma were primed to expect the worst, as wildly exaggerated tales of Yankee brutality had been circulating. "The reputation of Wilson's raiders had preceeded [*sic*] them," wrote one young woman. "Prison and penitentiary doors had been opened to swell the columns of the invading host."<sup>51</sup>

The occupant of one home described the invasion of some of Wilson's men. "They came galloping to our very doors, ran up the steps and through the house, up stairs and down. The rush of heavy, treading feet, booted and spurred, the clanking of swords, created such a din and uproar of sounds that the very house seemed coming down upon our heads."<sup>52</sup>

On the other hand, there is evidence that the fleeing Confederates fired a storehouse filled with cotton, which in turn spread to barracks and warehouses containing ammunition. Local vandals also took advantage of the situation to pillage at will.<sup>53</sup> Notwithstanding, by midnight the fires were largely under control and the provost guard had managed to restore a semblance of order. If it had been a disastrous day for the city of Selma, it had been a glorious hour for the men of the Cavalry Corps; both now shared the utter exhaustion of the moment. An Iowa soldier described the scene:

The soldiers overpowered by weariness, wrapped in their blankets, sunk to rest about the streets; the citizens exhausted by excitement and fear, the cries of their children hushed at last, snatching a troubled sleep; the wounded, lulled by opiates into forgetfulness of their amputated legs and arms; the dead in their last sleep, with white faces upturned to the sky; for the passion, cruelty, bitterness and anguish of war, this Sunday night now nearly gone, will be remembered. If there is a merciful God in the heavens, He must be looking down upon this scene in pity.<sup>54</sup>

For Wilson, the day's success represented an achievement of the first magnitude and demonstrated once again the value of using cavalry *en masse*. For the

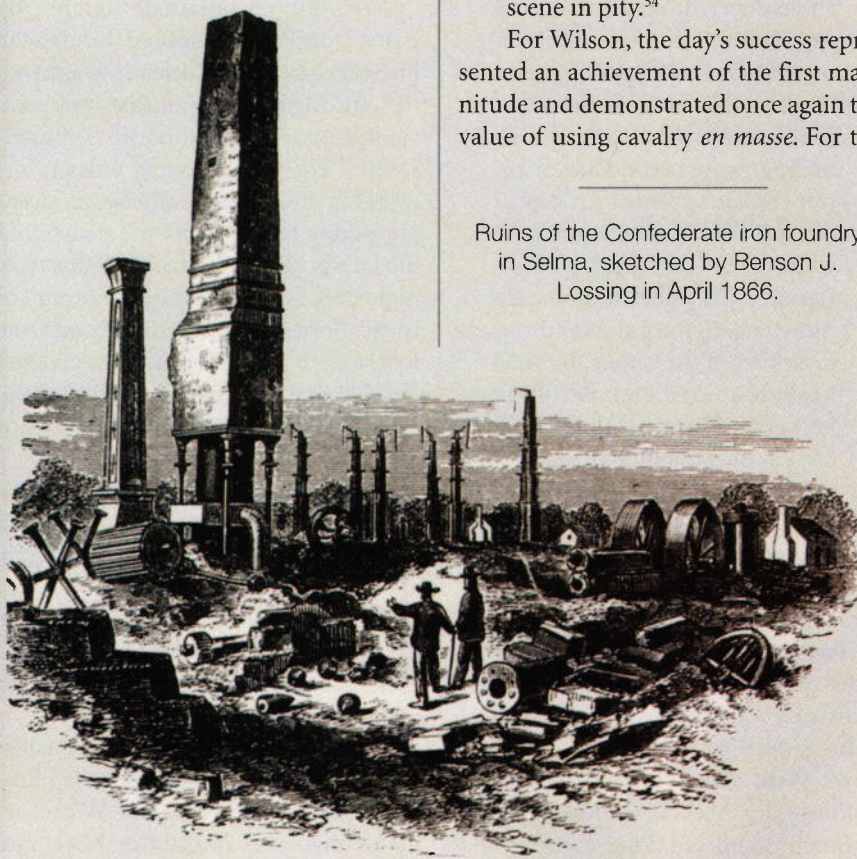
first time in this war a fortified city had been captured by cavalry alone—cavalry without infantry support. Wilson personally felt that the "capture of Selma [was the] most remarkable achievement in the history of modern cavalry."<sup>55</sup> Ironically, Richmond had fallen on this same April Sunday, although Wilson's troopers would not become aware of that for another three weeks. Many years later Wilson wrote:

Sunday, April 2, 1865, was the greatest day in the history of the Cavalry Corps M.D.M., for on that day it had not only captured the most complete set of fortifications in the South, covering the most important Confederate depots of manufacturing and supply, but it had by the same act planted itself firmly across the central line of railway connecting Richmond with the southwestern states. It had practically turned the Confederacy's left flank, captured its last and most valuable stronghold, put itself in position to occupy and roll up its last line of interior defense and communication, and finally made it certain that the cavalry army which had done these things could in a month more join Sherman and Grant in Virginia. But it was not till three weeks later that we knew Richmond, at the other end of the line, had fallen on the same day with Selma, and that these simultaneous events were practically the end of the War for the Union.<sup>56</sup>

The capture of Selma did not materially affect the outcome of the war. Grant later wrote that the campaign was so late in getting started that it resulted in unnecessary destruction and loss of life, and in retrospect it is difficult to challenge that statement.<sup>57</sup> At the time, however, the situation was not quite so clear. Although the end of the war seemed imminent, there was no way to tell exactly when hostilities were going to cease, and in the meantime field commanders had little choice but to continue operations until directed otherwise. As well, there remained the possibility that the collapse of the Richmond government did not automatically mean an end to armed resistance. There was fear in some quarters

Ruins of the Confederate iron foundry in Selma, sketched by Benson J. Lossing in April 1866.

PICTORIAL FIELD BOOK OF THE CIVIL WAR





that Confederate president Jefferson Davis might attempt to continue the conflict from the Trans-Mississippi West, in which case the military resources of both Selma and Columbus—which Wilson's forces captured two weeks later, on April 16—might well have played a key role in continuing the struggle.<sup>58</sup>

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#### NOTES:

1. James Pickett Jones, *Yankee Blitzkrieg: Wilson's Raid through Alabama and Georgia* (Athens, Georgia, 1976), pp. 12-13.
2. U.S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant*, Vol. II. (NY, 1886), pp. 518-521; *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C., 1880-1901), Series I, Vol. XLV, Part 1, pp. 621-622, Vol. XLIX, Part 1, pp. 708-709. (Hereafter O.R. All references are to Series I unless otherwise mentioned.)
3. Jerry Keenan, *Wilson's Cavalry Corps: Union Campaigns in the Western Theatre, October 1864 through Spring 1865* (Jefferson, NC, 1998), pp. 138-152; Jones, *Yankee Blitzkrieg*, pp. 12-19; James Harrison Wilson, *Under The Old Flag: Recollections of Military Operations In The War For The Union, The Spanish War, The Boxer Rebellion, Etc., 2 Volumes* (New York, 1912), Vol. II, pp. 160-189.
4. Grant to Thomas, O.R., Vol. XLIX, Part 1, pp. 708-709.
5. Wilson, *Under The Old Flag*, Vol. II, p. 165.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 181; Keenan, *Wilson's Cavalry*, pp. 149-150; Jones, *Yankee Blitzkrieg*, pp. 12-14.
7. O.R., Vol. XLIX, Part 1, pp. 783, 805; Wilson, *Under The Old Flag*, Vol. II, p. 190.
8. Keenan, *Wilson's Cavalry*, p. 150; Wilson, *Under The Old Flag*, Vol. II, pp. 177-178; O.R., Vol. XLIX, Part 1, pp. 356, 403-404, 409-411.
9. Keenan, *Wilson's Cavalry*, pp. 5-9; Jones, *Yankee Blitzkrieg*, pp. 5-9. For a complete picture of Wilson's life and career, see Edward G. Longacre, *From Union Stars to Top Hat: A Biography of the Extraordinary General James Harrison Wilson* (Harrisburg, PA, 1972).
10. Wilson, *Under The Old Flag*, pp. 168-169; Ezra J. Warner, *Generals In Blue* (Baton Rouge, 1964), p. 296.
11. Warner, *Generals in Blue*, p. 283; Wilson, *Under The Old Flag*, p. 170.
12. Warner, *Generals in Blue*, pp. 519-520; Wilson, *Under The Old Flag*, p. 166.
13. Keenan, *Wilson's Cavalry*, pp. 153-157; Jones, *Yankee Blitzkrieg*, pp. 49-52; Brian Steel Wills, *A Battle from the Start: The Life of Nathan Bedford Forrest* (NY, 1992), pp. 304-305.
14. Keenan, *Wilson's Cavalry*, pp. 162-167; Wilson, *Under The Old Flag*, pp. 200-208; O.R., Vol. XLIX, Part 1, pp. 350-353; Jones, *Yankee Blitzkrieg*, pp. 67-74.
15. Keenan, *Wilson's Cavalry*, p. 168; Wilson, *Under The Old Flag*, p. 221.
16. Wilson, *Under The Old Flag*, pp. 204-205, 212.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*, p. 222.
19. Wilson, *Under The Old Flag*, Vol. II, pp. 222-225; O.R., Vol. XLIX, Part 1, pp. 351, 359-360.
20. O.R., Vol. XLIX, Part 1, pp. 359-360.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 359-360, 438; Scott, *The Story of a Cavalry Regiment: The Career of the Fourth Iowa Veteran Volunteers From Kansas to Georgia 1861-1865* (NY, 1893), p. 452.
22. In his official report, Long claimed that Wilson at first agreed to his (Long's) suggestion, but then later reverted to his original plan. O.R., Vol. XLIX, Part 1, pp. 359-360.
23. Although descriptions of the Selma works are included in the official reports and other sources, the most detailed picture will be found in Scott, *Story of a Cavalry Regiment*, pp. 446-448.
24. It is not clear exactly how many men Forrest had. Wilson believed the number to be between 5,000 and 7,000, but that seems high. In his *Story of a Cavalry Regiment* (pp. 448-449), William Forse Scott presents a reasonable analysis of the numbers involved. See also, Keenan, *Wilson's Cavalry*, pp. 169, 241; Wills, *A Battle From The Start*, p. 310; John A. Wyeth, *That Devil Forrest* (NY, 1959), p. 548.
25. O.R., Vol. XLIX, Part 1, p. 360.
26. *Ibid.*, 447.
27. *Ibid.*, 470.
28. *Ibid.*, 360, 438. Miller says four companies were assigned to guard the pack train. See O.R., Vol. XLIX, Part 1, p. 447, and *That Devil Forrest*, p. 535.
29. O.R., Vol. XLIX, Part 1, p. 438.
30. David Evans, *Sherman's Horsemen: Union Cavalry Operations in the Atlanta Campaign* (Bloomington, 1996), pp. 21, 408; Wilson, *Under The Old Flag*, Vol. II, pp. 171-172.
31. O.R., Vol. XLIX, Part 1, pp. 438-439, 447-448, 451-452, 454. In his report, Wilson claimed it took only fifteen minutes.
32. *Ibid.*, 454.
33. *Ibid.*, 451-452.
34. *Ibid.*, 360, 438-439.
35. *Ibid.*, 441-442, 449.
36. *Ibid.*, 470.
37. Wilson, *Under The Old Flag*, Vol. 2, pp. 171-172; O.R., Vol. XLIX, Part 1, pp. 360, 438-439. In his report, Long said it took twenty-five minutes to reach the outer line of works.
38. O.R., Vol. XLIX, Part 1, p. 470.
39. Scott, *Story of a Cavalry Regiment*, pp. 452-453.
40. Wilson, *Under The Old Flag*, Vol. II, pp. 166-167.
41. O.R., Vol. XLIX, Part 1, p. 480; Scott, *Story of a Cavalry Regiment*, p. 454.
42. Scott, *Story of a Cavalry Regiment*, pp. 454-455.
43. Wilson, *Under The Old Flag*, Vol. II, p. 230; O.R., Vol. XLIX, Part 1, p. 470. Sheridan survived his Selma wound, was wounded again during the battle for Columbus on April 16, and died in Macon a week later.
44. Wilson, *Under The Old Flag*, Vol. II, p. 230.
45. O.R., Vol. XLIX, Part 1, pp. 470, 473, 496-497; Scott, *Story of a Cavalry Regiment*, p. 456.
46. Scott, *Story of a Cavalry Regiment*, p. 456; Joseph G. Vale, *Minty and the Cavalry* (Harrisburg, 1886), p. 431; O.R., Vol. XLIX, Part 1, p. 480.
47. O.R., Vol. XLIX, Part 1, p. 360.
48. Wyeth, *That Devil Forrest*, p. 536; Wills, *A Battle From The Start*, p. 310.
49. Thomas Franklin Dornblaser, *Saber Strokes of the Pennsylvania Dragoons in the War of 1861-1865* (Philadelphia, 1884), p. 212.
50. Wilson, *Under The Old Flag*, Vol. II, pp. 232-234.
51. S.A. Cunningham and Edith D. Pope, eds., *The Confederate Veteran* (Nashville, 1893-1932), Vol. 19, p. 67.
52. Phillips, "Reminiscences," p. 2.
53. *Ibid.*
54. William L. Curry, *Four Years In The Saddle: History of the First Regiment of Ohio Volunteer Cavalry* (Columbus, OH, 1898), p. 24; E. N. Gilpin, *The Last Campaign: A Cavalryman's Journal* (Leavenworth, KS, n.d.), p. 640.
55. Gilpin, *The Last Campaign*, p. 640.
56. O.R., Vol. XLIX, Part 1, p. 360.
57. Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, Vol. II, p. 518.
58. *Under The Old Flag*, Vol. II, pp. 234, 315; Noah Andre Trudeau, *Out of the Storm: The End of the Civil War April-June 1865* (Boston, 1994), pp. xii, 334-335.



# UPCOMING TOUR: JUNE 17-19, 2005

## New Interpretations of Gettysburg

**TOUR LEADERS:** Mike Miller and Troy Harman

**VENUE:** Eisenhower Inn (717-334-8121), 2634 Emmitsburg Road, Gettysburg

### Friday:

6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Reception

7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Dinner

8:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. New Interpretations of Gettysburg (Troy Harman)

### Saturday:

8:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Pickett's Charge: the final moments. A walking tour of the final moments of the charge, following Armistead and Garnett across the stone wall and ending at the "copse of trees."

12:30 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. Lunch

1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. South Cavalry Field: a walking tour of Kilpatrick's little-known Union cavalry attack on July 3, including Farnsworth's charge.

6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Dinner

7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Walking tour of the July 2 attack by Johnson's division, from Benner's Creek, across Rock Creek, to Culp's Hill.

### Sunday:

7:00 a.m. – 8:00 a.m. Breakfast

8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Johnson's reinforced attack of July 3.

**COST:** \$160.00 per person (\$175 after March 1)—includes Friday dinner, but not room or other meals. Checks should be made out to the Civil War Society and mailed to 33756 Black Mountain Road, Tollhouse, CA 93667. Or call 559-855-8637. Participants should call the Eisenhower Inn and book their own rooms (ask for Reservations and say you are with the Civil War Society group). Room rate is \$98.00 per night plus tax. TOUR IS LIMITED TO 48 people, so book early.



COURTESY RICK CUMMINS

Troy Harman has a captive audience at the 2004 tour.

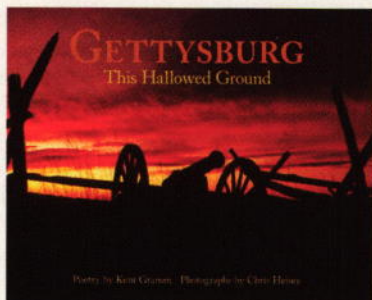
**Last Year's Columbus Day Weekend Tours at Gettysburg (October 8-11, 2004).** The battlefield tours were led by Troy Harman (author of *Lee's Real Plan*) and Mike Miller (author of *Even to Hell Itself*). Lecture: Tom Desjardins (author of *These Honored Dead*)—"Myth and Reality: Gettysburg in American Memory."

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This issue's front cover features "On to Gettysburg" by John Paul Strain. The painting depicts Robert E. Lee, James Longstreet, and key staff members meeting on the morning of June 30, 1863. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia had recently crossed into Pennsylvania on its second invasion of the North. Now, poised for a fight, and with news that George Meade had assumed command of the Army of the Potomac, Lee changes his orders—tomorrow's planned move on Harrisburg would be scrapped in favor of one toward Gettysburg. The opening of the epic battle was a day away.

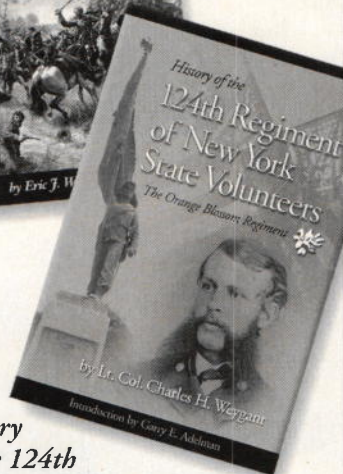
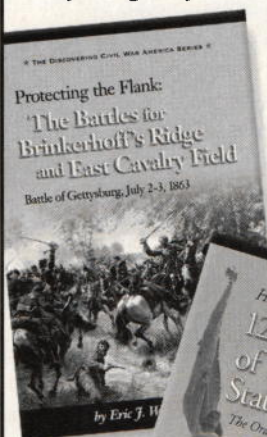
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Michael A. Flannery

# HAPLESS OR HELPMATE?

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE UNION'S BLOCKADE OF THE CONFEDERACY FROM A MEDICAL PERSPECTIVE

On April 19, 1861, just days after the Civil War broke out, President Abraham Lincoln sought to quell the rebellion with a blockade against South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas; eight days later he added Virginia and North Carolina to the list after these states joined the Confederacy. Lincoln's resolve to make this a thorough and effective blockade was clarified on August 16, when he declared as contraband "*all* [emphasis added] goods and chattels, wares and merchandise" entering those states without authority of the U.S. government, a decree that included forfeiture of the vessels carrying such articles.<sup>1</sup> This proclamation was bold, for it went beyond munitions and the ordinary implements of war to include virtually everything and anything entering a Southern port, from clothing to medicine.

Lincoln had presented his recently appointed secretary of the navy, Gideon Welles, with a formidable task. Not only would Welles have to patrol an extensive coastline from the mouth of the Potomac to the Rio Grande, but he was also faced with the nearly overwhelming prospect of effectively cutting the Confederacy in two by maintaining control of all river traffic from Cincinnati to New Orleans. In all some 3,500 miles of coastline needed round the clock surveillance with enough naval speed and firepower to provide reliable interception of blockade-runners that were sure to test the mettle of U.S. vessels and sailors. To accomplish this, the secretary had a mere ninety ships (only forty of which were steamers equal to the task) and under 8,000 men. To make matters worse, one-fifth of his officer corps had joined the Confederacy when secession became a reality.

Just five days before Lincoln's initial proclamation, Welles had argued vehemently against a general blockade. His

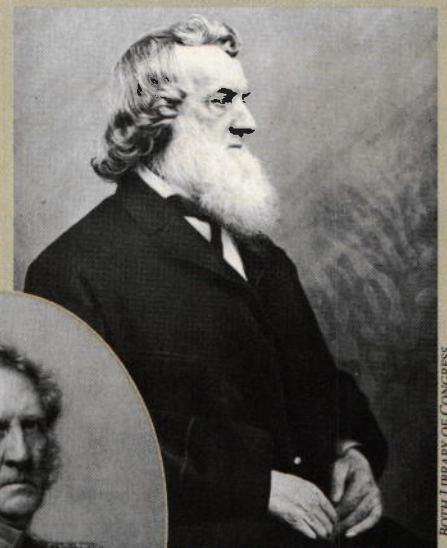
fleet was not equal to the task, he argued, and a blockade would by international law only serve to give recognition to the belligerents. Instead, Welles preferred an executive order closing all ports of entry. But simply hanging a "not open for business" sign would not serve much purpose and would most likely only annoy the British and French, who were ready to endorse a regular blockade that was only as good as the U.S. Navy could make it. An actual shutdown of trade with port closures was a far more ominous prospect for European commerce and trade.<sup>2</sup>

Despite Secretary Welles' objections, the blockade had one strong proponent: old warhorse and commanding general of Union forces, Winfield Scott. Scott had suggested a general blockade as a key to subduing the South. He felt that a slow strangulation of the Confederacy would provide (with patience and persistence) the desired effect with a minimum of bloodshed. But others—including the press—thought his "Anaconda Plan" too slow, too costly, and too passive for an effective war strategy. The war of words must have been heated as the secretary of the navy, bewigged and white bearded "Father Neptune," argued with the commanding general, the pompous and opinionated "Old Fuss and Feathers."

In the end, Scott would have his blockade. Although the Anaconda Plan was never formally adopted and Fuss and Feathers would be replaced by an equally haughty George B. McClellan later that fall, in the words of naval historian Ivan Musicant, "the movements, in all fact, were exactly what happened." For his part, Welles went about his charge of carrying out the blockade with resolution and

verve. With diligence, a keen eye for talent, and an attitude that did not suffer fools gladly, by the spring of 1865 he commanded some 51,500 sailors and a hodgepodge but massive fleet of well over six hundred vessels, about five hundred of which were pressed into blockade service.<sup>3</sup>

But how tight was this naval noose? Early on, the general consensus among historians was that it had, in fact, been effective. Praising the work of the U.S.



BOTH LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles (above), whose white beard and dour expression inspired the moniker "Old Neptune," built an effective naval blockade almost from scratch, even though he thought the measure ill-advised.

The legacy of the short-lived Civil War command of Winfield Scott (left) was a strategy based upon a blockade of Confederate ports. An old warhorse who distinguished himself in the Mexican War, Scott's devotion to military regulations earned him the sobriquet "Old Fuss and Feathers."

Opposite: J.B. Elliott's 1861 cartoon map. Derided in the press as an expensive, grandiose, and ineffective scheme, Scott's Anaconda Plan has remained a matter of controversy from the day it was proposed.



Navy in effectively occupying the Mississippi, F. E. Chadwick in 1911 declared that greater still "was the effect of the monotonous and unheroic work of the blockade in Atlantic waters. By the end of the war there were captured or destroyed, in all, one thousand five hundred and four vessels, of a value of over thirty million dollars, much of which was British property. Large as was the money value, it was as nothing in comparison with the effect in deciding the great question at issue, through the loss of that without which the South could not live."<sup>4</sup> Others have dismissed this as Whiggish history of the worst kind. Frank Owsley, vehement defender of the Lost Cause, marshaled evidence of a continual exchange of cotton, arms, and other goods through Southern ports to insist that the whole naval strategy to strangle the Confederacy was nothing more than a paper blockade that even

the South refused to take seriously. For Owsley, the South was not so much strangled as it was simply overwhelmed by the massive industrial might and sheer numbers of the North. In *Why the South Lost the Civil War*, Richard E. Beringer and his colleagues also viewed the blockade as ineffective. To them, "Confederates could get whatever they wanted or needed through the blockade, if they wanted it badly enough. To do so, they had to regulate the trade by law or price, and they eventually adopted both methods." But, according to a more recent study by David G. Surdam, this was precisely what the South could *not* do. Surdam points out that the blockade robbed the Confederacy of its price-setting power in cotton. "By toppling King Cotton from his regal perch and dealing the South a catastrophic economic loss," asserts Surdam, "the blockade won a vic-

tory that was surely as devastating as any particular battlefield defeat in fatally weakening the South's war-making capability." Moreover, he insists that the blockade significantly raised the cost of shipping, forced importation through remote and inconvenient ports, prevented the transportation of large bulky items, and forced a general reduction in imported goods. Yet Jochem H. Tans has insisted that the real problem rested in "the Confederate inability to take advantage of the weakness of the blockade" because of its own ill-considered cotton embargo and its inability to launch and sustain a coordinated blockade-running effort. In and of itself, the blockade was, according to Tans, "hapless."<sup>5</sup>

So which is it? Was the blockade a hapless waste of effort or a true helpmate in Union victory? Evidence of large cargoes of contraband may persuade detractors





tors of the blockade, but even the newspapers of the day were not impressed. As early as September 1862, the *Daily Lynchburg Virginian*, in reporting a large assortment of much-needed merchandise arriving into port at Wilmington, North Carolina, derisively commented, "Men of wealth may be able to pay the retail prices at which these goods must sell, but how persons of ordinary means are to do it, is another matter."<sup>6</sup> So the sheer amount of materials slipping through the blockade does not definitively answer the question of effectiveness. Perhaps another vantage point will bring the elusive Anaconda into better view. One aspect that has clearly *not* been analyzed thoroughly is the effectiveness of the Union blockade from a medical perspective. Whether or not the blockade had any appreciable effect on the reliable acquisition of medical supplies would surely be one benchmark for testing the relationship of the blockade to the Confederate war effort.

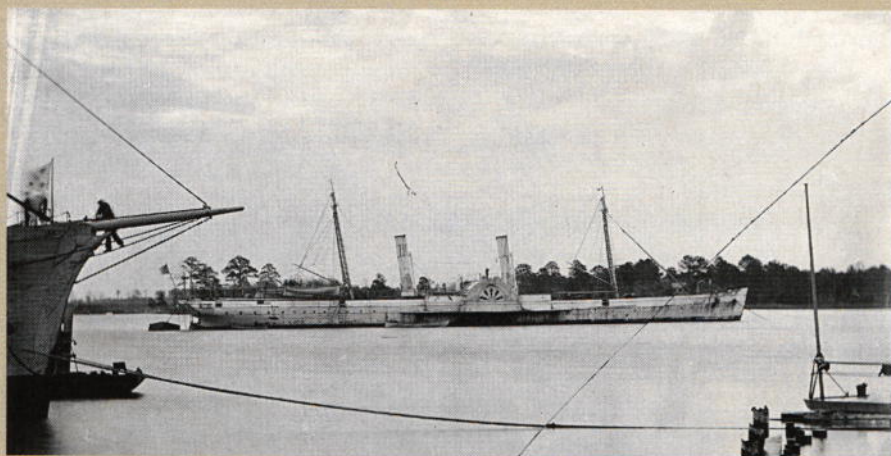
The appreciation of this fact begins with an understanding of the health care challenges facing medical departments on both sides of the Mason-Dixon. The utter sickness of the Civil War has long been recognized. Confederate surgeon Joseph Jones estimated that disease was responsible for three-quarters of all Southern mortality; modern analysts have suggested that the average soldier had about twice the likelihood of dying from a camp illness as from a field injury. With little understanding of the microbial basis for disease, surgeons and assistant surgeons could do little except improve superficial hygienic conditions, try to manage symptoms, and apply hit-or-miss remedies to mysterious ailments emanating from equally mysterious miasmas, swamp gases, and assorted effluvia. Confederate surgeon Edwin Gaillard, in assessing the medical impact of the war, insisted that the blockade only served to prove that most medicines then in vogue were worthless anyway.<sup>7</sup>

Such a conclusion is unquestionably wrong if one takes into account the tremendous importance of certain remedies well known and well used throughout the war, most notably opium for controlling pain and quinine in combating malaria.<sup>8</sup> High quality opium (from the poppy plant, *Papaver somniferum*) is the crude drug from which morphine is obtained.

More importantly, it had to be imported. It came from throughout Asia Minor, but Turkish opium was especially sought after. Opium was one of the most important medicines of the Union and Confederate supply tables, a fact borne out in the number of powerful analgesics and sedatives prescribed during the war—laudanum, Dover's powder, and Dalby's Carminative, to name but a few. Unlike a number of spurious remedies of the day, opium really does manage pain and can be an effective sedative with proper dosage. But opium does not really *cure* anything, and is more valued for its ability to provide comfort than actual therapy; it is essentially a symptom manager.

questionably the popular dose with the doctors." While quinine sulfate was the most highly prized anti-malarial drug by the time of the Civil War, preparations of cinchona bark were still very familiar and in wide use by the medical profession. Edward R. Squibb proposed an extract of fluid cinchona in the midst of the conflict, a suggestion that was soon incorporated into the Union medical supply tables.<sup>9</sup> While less potent than quinine sulfate, tinctures and decoctions of cinchona bark in a knowledgeable surgeon's hands could provide very good, second-best relief from malarial fevers.

The ability of the Union blockade to cut off the South's cinchona and/or qui-



The former blockade runner *Robert E. Lee* docked at Fort Donelson. Built for speed, steamers like this were the main focus of the U.S. Navy's attention.

Quinine, however, is different. Quinine sulfate is the active constituent of cinchona bark (sometimes referred to as Peruvian or Jesuit's bark), discovered by French chemists Pelletier and Caventou in 1820, which really *does* prevent and/or cure malaria. Cinchona (especially *Cinchona calisaya*) had been hailed as a miraculous cure for malaria at least since its apocryphal but legendary cure of the Countess of Cinchon, wife of the Spanish viceroy of Peru, around 1623 (from which the tree received its name). Brought to Rome by Jesuits in 1631 or 1632, by the time the French chemists announced they had elucidated a purified form of the familiar medicinal bark, physicians embraced it as one of the therapeutic sensations of the century. As John D. Billings of the 10th Massachusetts Battery recalled, "Quinine was always and everywhere prescribed with a confidence and freedom which left all other medicine far in the rear. Making all due allowances for exaggeration, that drug was un-

nine supplies would seem especially instructive for several reasons. First of all, cinchona was required to process quinine sulfate, and throughout the Civil War the world's supply in the Peruvian and Bolivian bark was controlled by two government monopolies in Dutch and English hands.<sup>10</sup> Second, the entire American pure quinine sulfate then manufactured was produced by two Philadelphia firms: Rosengarten & Sons and Powers and Weightman. Both had lucrative contracts with the U.S. Army and neither was interested in advancing Confederate fortunes at any price. Third, unlike many other medicines of the mid-nineteenth century, quinine, when given in proper dosage—from ten to twenty-four grains in active cases and two to four grains as a preventive—provided reliable results. But dosage was problematic: give too little and it would prove ineffective; give too much and fever would be replaced with symptoms of cinchonism—headache, tinnitus, poor sight, and ir-



regular heartbeat. Southern physicians may not have known that malaria was transmitted by the bite of the *Anopheles* mosquito, but they knew an effective dose-response relationship when they saw one, and by and large proper dosage was worked out satisfactorily. Dr. Perrine of Natchez reported effective treatment as early as 1826, and even though most physicians dismissed Alabama physician Josiah Clark Nott's suggestion that the disease was transmitted by an insect vector (a "discovery" that awaited Albert F. A. King's path-breaking article thirty-five years later), by the 1840s physicians were hailing quinine as "the Sampson of the materia medica."<sup>11</sup> Dr. S. C. Farrar of Jackson, Mississippi, reported that the medicinal properties of quinine prompted a significant reduction in the practice of bleeding and the prescribing

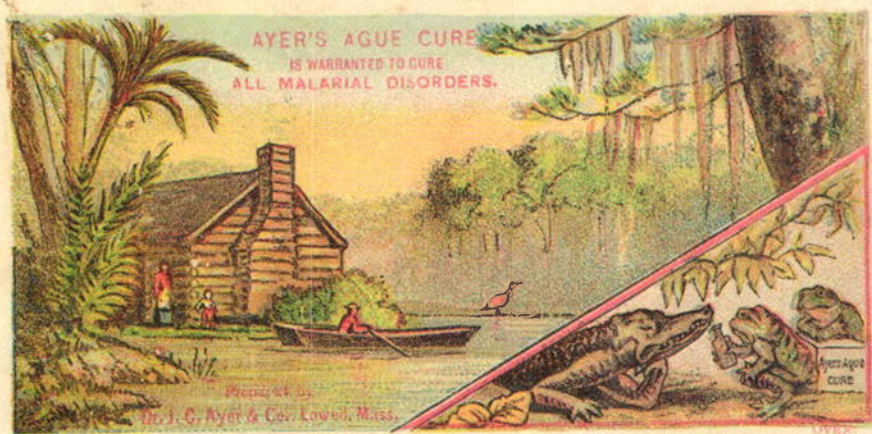
of harsh mercurials. While a wide variety of herbs and minerals were part of every physician's armamentarium, Farrar admitted to relying "above all on the use of quinine in sedative doses. Since this change in practice," he added, "our intermittent and remittent [malarial] fevers are more manageable..."<sup>12</sup> The efficacy of quinine was not open to question thereafter. The great physician Sir William Osler gave the classic pronouncement when he hailed it as "a specific in the truest sense of the term. In not a single instance among the several hundred cases of intermittent fever which I have had under observation during the past seven years did quinine fail to check the paroxysms."<sup>13</sup> Finally, malaria was a serious illness for both armies, but with fewer men to rely upon generally, the prolonged effects of malarial fever would

disproportionately affect the Confederacy's ability to wage a successful defense against continued Union onslaughts.

The degree to which supplies of quinine and cinchona mattered can be seen in the prevalence of malaria itself. Statistics generally bear out that malaria was more prevalent but less fatal among Confederate forces.<sup>14</sup> Surgeon Jones' analysis of malarial fevers (often referred to as "paroxysmal" because of their sudden and violent onset and persistent recurrence) in the Army of Tennessee from June 1862 through May 1863 indicated a ratio of seventy-six cases per thousand, compared to fifty-five per thousand among Union troops. While the difference in these figures might not seem significant, it should be kept in mind that incidents of malaria were highly variable and geographically dependent upon a region's conduciveness to breeding large mosquito populations. Hot, marshy areas frequently held sizable numbers of disease-harboring mosquitoes and were especially prone to malaria. This was especially true in Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida. Here malaria ran rampant. From January 1862 to July 1863 there were 41,539 cases of malarial fevers in an area with a mean troop strength of 35,925. Similarly, Confederate forces stationed in and around Mobile, Alabama, presented with 1,420 cases of malaria per 1,000 of mean strength for the same period.<sup>15</sup>

The chart left provides the total number of fevers from another perspective. Of the major diagnosed diseases, paroxysmal fevers ranked second only to diarrhea/dysentery, with eruptive fevers (i.e., measles) and continued fevers (i.e., viral/bacterial infections of varying etiologies) less than half those of a malarial type. Of course some classed within the paroxysmal group may not have been cases of actual malaria, but it is probably safe to conclude that a great many were.

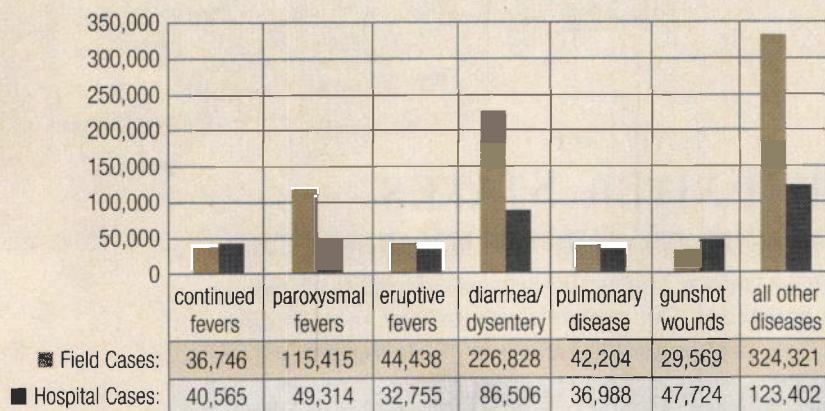
Beringer and associates disparage the blockade by indicating that even the Confederate government refused to take it seriously. "Confederate officials," they claim, "wrote surprisingly little about the blockade in their correspondence and exhibited more concern over its international implications than over the blockade itself or its effects on the Confederacy."<sup>16</sup> They apparently did not examine the correspondence emanating



This trade card amusingly touts the benefits of Ayer's Ague Cure amid the swampy lowlands that bred the fever it was designed to alleviate. It was first manufactured in 1858 and contained (among other things) eight grains of quinine.

#### CONFEDERATE SICK AND WOUNDED

REPORTS ON FILE IN THE SURGEON-GENERAL'S OFFICE, 1861-1862



Source: "Grand Summary of the Sick and Wounded of the Confederate States Army Under Treatment During the Years 1861 and 1862," *Confederate States Medical and Surgical Journal* vol. 1, no. 9 (September 1864): 139-140.



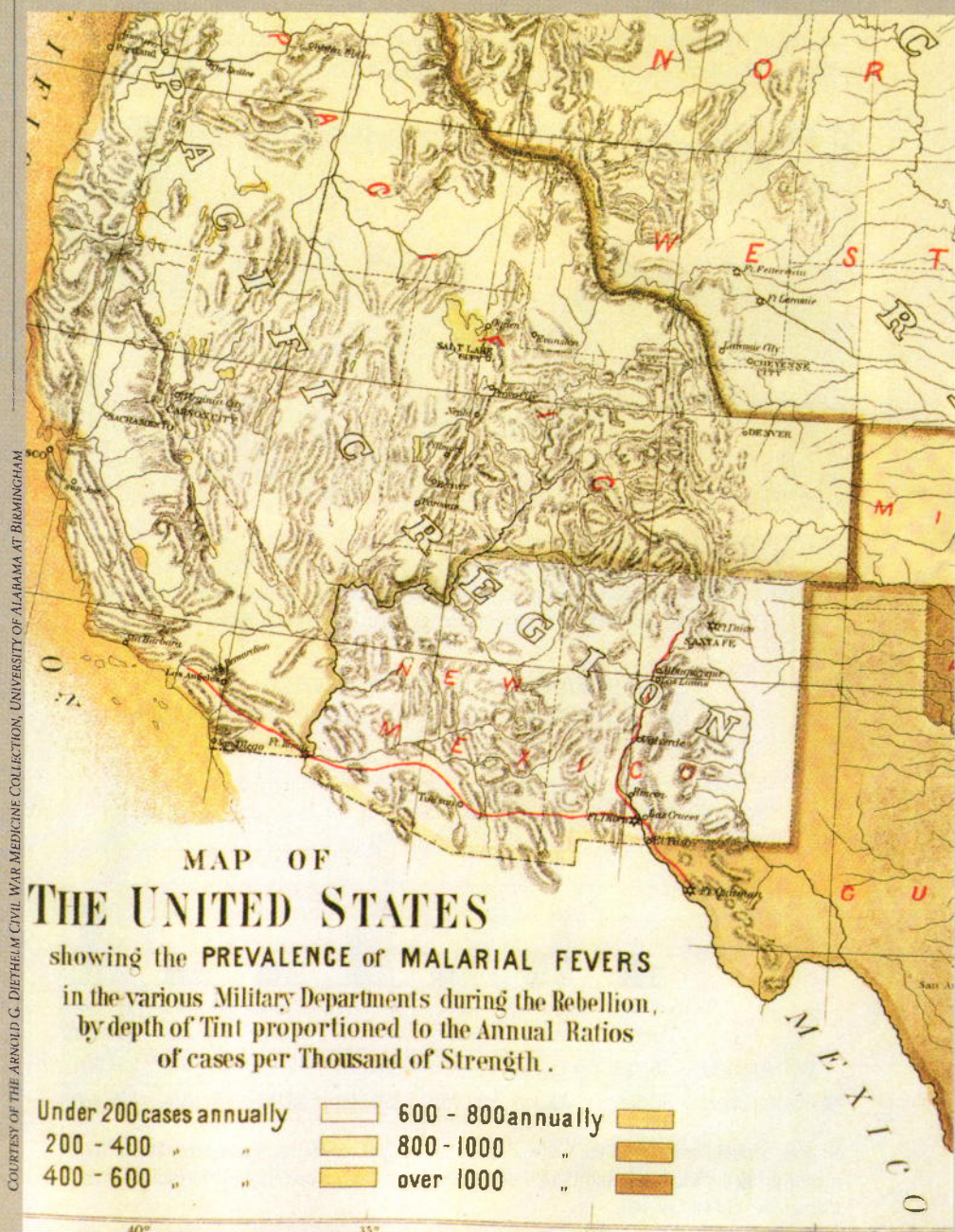
from the Confederate Medical Department. Just one year after hostilities began, Surgeon General Samuel Preston Moore called upon the medical corps to turn its attentions to "the appropriation of our indigenous medicinal substances of the vegetable kingdom" in an attempt "to diminish its tribute to foreigners." Years after the war Moore insisted that his effort to find viable plant drug substitutes within the Confederacy's own borders was motivated by the uncertainty of trans-Atlantic medical supplies smuggled in through blockade-runners.<sup>17</sup>

In fact, it is fair to say that the blockade and its effects was a veritable obsession among those associated with the Confederate Medical Department. Dr. C. Kendrick of Mississippi recalled that for two years he found it impossible to get regular medicines "except in small quantities and on rare occasions." Likewise, Dr. C.J. Edwards of Abbeville, Louisiana, blamed the blockade for medical shortages early on in the war. Atlanta pharmacist Joseph Jacobs indicated a steady but wholly insufficient stream of medicines coming in through blockade-runners, a fact that taxed the ingenuity of apothecaries throughout the South, not the least of which included a scarcity of paper, twine, and corks with which to adequately put up preparations. Dr. Claudius H. Mastin of Mobile, Alabama, bemoaned the effects of a "rigid blockade" that had left him and his colleagues "with the scantiest supplies of medical resources." J. W. Mallet, superintendent of the ordnance laboratories of the Confederacy, admitted his duties were frustrated by "[t]he continual blockade along the waterfront on the east and south, the armies on the north, the Mississippi river and the mountains on the west, [that] made it almost impossible for the introduction of materials [drugs] essential for the carrying on of a great war." By the fall of 1864 naval Surgeon-in-Charge W. A. W. Spotswood complained of great sickness (especially fever) along the James River and from Savannah to Charleston, and added that, "owing to the strict blockade of the seacoast and harbors of the Confederacy, rendering it impossible now to procure medical supplies from abroad, I fear that there will necessarily be much difficulty in

procuring many valuable articles soon required for the use of the sick."<sup>18</sup> If the aforementioned accounts are correct, Spotswood's concerns arrived on Secretary of the Navy S. R. Mallory's desk very late indeed.

Given the prevalence of malaria and the effectiveness of quinine or its natural analogue cinchona bark in alleviating it, the dearth of drugs was most acutely felt in the absence of these anti-malarial agents. Untreated malaria was a serious affair. The especially distressing circumstances surrounding an epidemic of the disease in combat situations can only be fully appreciated by briefly reviewing the malarial symptoms those infected experienced. Following the bite of a female

mosquito of the *Anopheles* genus that carried any one of four different *Plasmodium* parasites, the victim first suffered from a headache, abdominal discomfort, muscular aches and pains, and general lethargy. Full paroxysm included undulating attacks of severe fever, complete with teeth chattering, profuse sweating and chilling, and utter exhaustion. Left untreated, relapse often occurred, the liver and spleen would become enlarged, and anemia would ensue, with the victim losing weight and becoming emaciated. While death is comparatively rare, those suffering from malaria were often prone to secondary infections from which they, already weakened by the recurring malarial fevers, would succumb.





A regiment suffering from malaria with little or no quinine was clearly no fighting force. The fact that these drugs could also *prevent* malaria only added to their importance. The Union's experience with quinine as a malaria preventive was admittedly equivocal. Its use prophylactically did not work universally (probably due to inconsistent dosage and administration), but a general consensus of the Medical Department was favorable for its use in this regard. At the same time it was noted that the anti-malarial was not widely prescribed as a preventive in Confederate forces "chiefly because of a scarcity of the drug." Confederate surgeon Samuel Logan knew this all too well. In the spring of 1864 his men were dug in

on a defensive line restricted to "the sickly lowlands, just within the belt of sea-islands." He had attempted a study among his South Carolina men as to the usefulness of quinine given prophylactically and felt that preliminary results suggested that four-fifths of the malaria cases could be prevented in this manner. Unfortunately, there is no indication of sustained use, and in two companies the trials were suspended directly due to insufficient supplies.<sup>19</sup>

The inability to acquire sufficient quinine was often keenly felt. Just four months into the war the 16th Tennessee Volunteers was riddled with untreated malaria, and one-third of the Confederates under W.W. Loring's command in

western Virginia were down with "a malignant type of fever." An epidemic of malaria coupled with an absence of quinine also figured prominently in Confederate general John C. Breckinridge's inability to wrest control of Baton Rouge from Union forces on August 5, 1862. Starting with a larger force, two-thirds of his army was depleted by the effects of malaria, allowing the Federals under General Thomas Williams to hold on successfully with an equal number of defenders. Later in the war, when the Confederacy's dwindling human resources in the East desperately needed replenishment from the West, troops stationed in Arkansas were rendered useless in a stalemate dictated by endemic malaria.<sup>20</sup>

The problem of acquiring quinine for the Confederacy was exacerbated by economic problems fostered by the blockade. Blockade-runners were not by definition altruistic Southern patriots; they were entrepreneurs seeking a maximum return on each cargo. The crews of private vessels received top wages in gold (half paid at the beginning of the voyage and half upon return), as much as five times that of a Confederate ordnance vessel. For the companies and their investors in these high-risk ventures, successful runs could net remarkable returns. Initial investment was more than covered with just one successfully landed cargo, profits often reaching and exceeding one hundred percent. One especially fortunate company paid dividends late in 1864 that reached 2,500 percent over the



Map of the incidents of malaria among Union troops from *The Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion*, pt. III, *Medical History*, vol. 1 (1888). The disease could be highly situational, as the surgeon general's office explained: "The map shows in a general way the greater frequency of the malarial fevers in the southern portions of the Atlantic and Central regions. Apparent exceptions were due to easily explained circumstances. Thus, in the Atlantic region the troops in the Department of the South [South Carolina, Georgia, Florida] suffered less than those of the North Carolina command, because the greater portion of the former occupied during most of the war comparatively healthy sites on coast islands. Had the fortune of war carried them into the more malarious districts, they would undoubtedly have had an experience similar to that of the rebel troops that held those districts" (pp. 100-101).



initial share price.<sup>21</sup> Drugs—especially quinine and cinchona bark—were highly lucrative because they took up little space and promised a high profit per pound. Typical was one druggist who reported contraband quinine selling in Richmond in June 1863 for \$22.25 per ounce, nearly seven times the highest regular U.S. market price for the year.<sup>22</sup> Late in 1864 the quartermaster for the Confederate Bureau of Cotton Exchange in Jackson, Mississippi, complained to the assistant adjutant general that cotton at fifty cents per pound was being used by the civilian state government to purchase quinine at a rate of \$100 per ounce, while his office was restricted to purchasing it at \$10 to \$12 per ounce (even at that rate about three times its going price in Northern markets).<sup>23</sup> With such enormous profits to be made, speculators naturally became a serious problem. Very early in the war Confederate generals were ordered to “authorize their medical purveyors to impress all medical supplies held by speculators, paying them the cost price for the articles.”<sup>24</sup> But as we have seen, “cost price” in the South was many times that of the general market price. To make matters worse, there was no guarantee these items purchased at exorbitant prices were even worth it. Some companies and crews less attentive to scruples loaded on whatever they could get in the holds of their ships. With anti-malarials such high-demand articles, incidents of adulteration were all too common. Typical was Charles T. Mohr of the Mobile purveying depot, who found quinine bearing the French label “throughout, highly adulterated.”<sup>25</sup>

The lack of quality quinine sent the Confederate Medical Department scrambling for substitutes. One hospital steward called Moore’s search for indigenous plant-drug substitutes “a nightmare that sits upon the brain of the Surgeon-General.”<sup>26</sup> The *real* nightmare was thousands of untreated cases of malaria looming increasingly large as the war progressed. Of all the regular medicines that required importation—opium, olive oil, senna, tannin, valerian, cantharides, jalap, ipsecac, guaiacum, gum Arabic, ergot, foxglove, belladonna, etc.—none received more undivided attention than quinine/cinchona. The tulip tree, cottonseed tea, boneset, willow bark, sweet gum, and even turpentine were all tried. No plant



The scarcity of and demand for quinine, along with hyperinflation, sent prices for the article soaring. The quartermaster in Jackson, Mississippi, complained that he was unable to compete with his own civilian state government, which was willing to pay as much as \$100 an ounce for the precious medicine.

Lafayette Guild (left), medical director of the Army of Northern Virginia, in August 1874 wrote in exasperation to Surgeon General Moore that epidemic fever, lack of quinine, and ineffective substitutes were combining to critically deplete the army’s strength.

Samuel Preston Moore (right), surgeon general of the Confederacy. Concerned over a lack of imported medicines due to the Union blockade, Moore ordered the Medical Department to launch an investigation of indigenous plant drug substitutes.



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provided a more hopeful alternative to the precious cinchona bark than the equally bitter bark of the dogwood tree. The most popular of all was a preparation recommended by the surgeon general’s office called “compound tincture of the indigenous barks” to be used as a “substitute as far as practicable for quinine.”<sup>27</sup> It consisted of dried dogwood bark and dried poplar bark, thirty parts each; dried willow bark, forty parts; whiskey ninety proof; and two pounds of the dried bark per one gallon whiskey. It was then steeped for fourteen days, and given in one-ounce doses, three times a day. By 1864, however, it was becoming clear that the only property shared between dogwood and cinchona was their bitter taste. Confederate assistant surgeon W. T. Grant confessed in despair, “Our efforts to procure a reliable substitute for quinine, has thus far proved a failure . . .”<sup>28</sup> Union medical authorities agreed: “it does not appear that any formal reports testifying to its [dogwood’s] efficacy were rendered; for as these were requested by

the medical authorities, it may be assumed that, had any been returned, they undoubtedly would have been published.”<sup>29</sup>

As the war dragged on drug shortages became more and more acute in all the Southern purveyors’ depots. District no. 4 at Macon, Georgia (formerly at Savannah), showed particularly weak inventories of quinine sulfate, and the Western Department at Memphis and Jackson recorded a paucity of drug receipts and disbursements. When the medical supply depot at Richmond was captured in the Confederate capital’s fall in April 1865, it had but sixteen ounces of quinine on hand.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps no one in the medical corps summed up the threefold problem of absent quinine, poor substitutes, and their weakening influence upon troop strength than did the Army of Northern Virginia’s medical director, Dr. Lafayette Guild:

There are almost daily complaints from the medical officers particularly from those of General Beauregard’s command of the great scarcity of medical supplies, especially



such as tonics and antiperiodics, much disease at present prevails among the troops in the trenches consisting principally of Intermittent & Remittent Fever and bowel affection. Yet it is believed that the strength of the army would not be naturally influenced if suitable remedies could be obtained for the treatment of cases in camp. The scarcity of Sulphate of Quinea is assuming a very serious character, all of its substitutes that can be procured, are being used yet with little permanent benefit. The necessity of sending so many patriots to General Hospital arises only from the want of medicines suitable for their treatment in camp & the field infirmaries.<sup>31</sup>

Eight months later, the war would be over. Veterans of a hungry, beleaguered, and fever-ridden army could disband and return to their farms and families. No one was more relieved than Dr. Guild.

Thus, in debating the impact of the blockade, the important effects it had upon medical supply must be considered. Although accurate statistics for total incidents of malaria among Confederate troops are not available, it is known that more than half (522 per thousand) of all Union forces fell ill with malaria. Extrapolating from known figures of Confederate malaria, the overall incidents of this disease among Southerners were probably higher. The debilitating effects of poor quinine supplies directly due to the Union blockade cannot be ignored as an important factor in impeding the Confederate ability to fight effectively. Indeed, statistics suggest that had quality quinine in sufficient therapeutic quantities been readily available to the Confederate medical corps, the effective fighting capability of the South would have nearly doubled. Historians have largely ignored this fact in considering the effectiveness of the blockade. In a theme championed by Frank Owsley and echoed years later by Stephen Wise, Hamilton Cochran maintained that the blockade "was never fully effective."<sup>32</sup> Perhaps, but it was effective enough to keep adequate supplies of quinine from entering Confederate ports, and the general result was to disrupt the economics

of drug acquisition sufficiently to keep the supply tables depleted of those needed most by the military.

Of course, this is not to suggest that inadequate quinine supplies single-handedly brought the Confederacy to its knees; many other factors were involved. Overwhelming industrial production, a constant supply of Federal recruits, a thoroughly dismantled Southern railway system that had already been comparatively weak, and (after a painful period trial and error) a Union high command ready and willing to press the conflict, all played their part. Yet with Confederate forces already depleted in the later years of the war, disease became an increasingly reliable ally of the North. If at least one major sickness like malaria could have been held at bay with proper regimens of a known remedy such as quinine or cinchona, one has to believe that conditions in camp and field would have been appreciably better for the Confederates. Despite the naysayers, Norman Franke's study of Confederate drug supplies concluded that "as the blockade tightened and the much-needed medicines could not come through the blockade, the South strangled, bit by bit, a victim of its own geography and lack of industrial facilities."<sup>33</sup>

Unlike some smuggled items, quinine supplies had a direct impact on the forces in the field. Moreover, the economics of the blockade can also be seen in the inflated prices it encouraged for the product. Hardly a hapless exercise in futility, the blockade from a medical perspective was the U.S. Army's helpmate in victory by preventing the Confederacy from receiving the all-important ammunition it needed to fight one of its most formidable opponents—the tiny *Anopheles* mosquito and her debilitating plasmodia. ■

**MICHAEL A. FLANNERY** is Associate Professor and Associate Director for Historical Collections, Lister Hill Library of the Health Sciences, University of Alabama at Birmingham. He is the author of several books, most recently *Civil War Pharmacy: A History of Drugs, Drug Supply and Provision, and Therapeutics for the Union and Confederacy* (Haworth Press, 2004).

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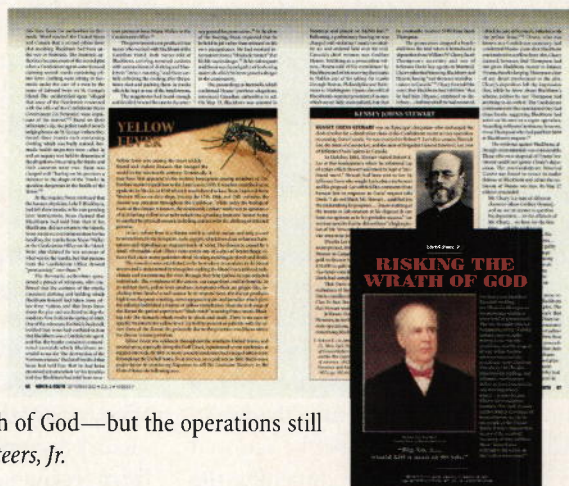
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## RISKING THE WRATH OF GOD

During the Civil War Dr. Luke Blackburn attempted to create yellow fever epidemics in northern and northern-occupied cities. The Reverend Kensey Johns Stewart, a senior member of the Confederate Secret Service, warned Jefferson Davis that such operations risked the wrath of God—but the operations still went forward. —Edward Steers, Jr.



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## ARMY OF THE POTOMAC, VOLUME 2 McClellan Takes Command, September 1861-February 1862

By Russel H. Beatie (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Da Capo Press, 2004. Pp. xxxv + 636, illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00. ISBN: 0306-81252-5).

The Army of the Potomac was the largest and best-equipped force that the Union fielded during the Civil War. Its proximity to northeastern newspaper hubs also ensured it the most media coverage. However, the Army of the Potomac turned out to be a hard-luck organization. While the North's western armies began gutting the Confederate heartland in early 1862, it took the Army of the Potomac nearly four years to advance one hundred miles from its home base at Washington D.C. and capture the enemy capital of Richmond, Virginia.

Although the Army of the Potomac suffered from a succession of commanding generals who lacked the audacity, imagination, and killer instinct to score decisive victories, it has been blessed by the caliber of its historians. In the early 1950s Bruce Catton raised Civil War writing to a new level with his three-volume history of "Mr. Lincoln's Army." Thirty years later, Stephen W. Sears began producing his brilliant books on the Army of the Potomac's battles and campaigns in 1862 and 1863. Gordon C. Rhea's multi-volume history of Ulysses S. Grant's 1864 Overland Campaign is currently treating readers to a graphic recreation of the Army of the Potomac's bloodiest ordeal. Now with the release of Russel H. Beatie's second volume on that army's leadership, a new giant joins this class of master historians.

*McClellan Takes Command* represents an achievement that deserves the label monumental. Part organizational history, part military epic, and part political soap opera, the book weaves an involved tale with such fascinating detail that it is hard to put down. Beatie's mastery of primary sources and the works of other historians registers on every page. He exhibits a broad familiarity with military and political affairs that few of his peers can match.

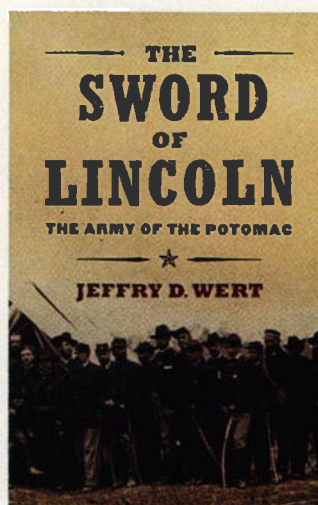
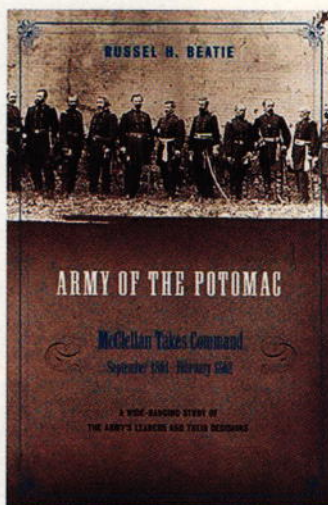
The controversial figure of Major General George Brinton McClellan occupies center stage throughout most of this volume. While not denying McClellan's flaws, Beatie offers

## BRIEFINGS

plausible reasons for the most arrogant and infuriating behavior exhibited by the "Young Napoleon." Beatie also provides unforgettable character sketches of Abraham Lincoln, the inexperienced and irritating prairie politician striving desperately to grow into the role of commander-in-chief; Edwin M. Stanton, the backstairs plotter and false friend who turned on McClellan soon after becoming secretary of war; and a host of other Union politicians and military officers. The clear and lyrical way in which Beatie describes the small engagements that punctuated this period promises readers numerous treats once his series reaches the Army of the Potomac's major battles.

Beatie's work can be considered essential reading for anyone wishing to understand the Civil War in the eastern theatre and the great Northern army that ultimately triumphed over Robert E. Lee.

—Gregory J. W. Urwin  
Temple University



## THE SWORD OF LINCOLN The Army of the Potomac

By Jeffery D. Wert (New York: Simon & Schuster's, 2005. Pp. 560, maps, \$35.00. ISBN 0-7432-2506-6).

The Army of the Potomac was the principal Union army east of the Appalachians. Facing Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia from June 1862 to April 1865, the army compiled a record of more defeats than victories. Yet in the end it emerged victorious when Lee surrendered at Appomattox.

In the early 1950s Bruce Catton's trilogy that chronicled the Army of the Potomac's history appeared in print. Jeff Wert's *Sword of Lincoln* is the first book since Catton's—now over fifty years—that addresses and fills a serious gap in Civil War history. Writing in Catton's folksy style, Wert admirably chronicles the Army of the Potomac's troubled history, from the period of its organization in

the spring of 1861 until its disbandment after the end of hostilities in 1865.

Wert was not out to write a detailed study of the army's numerous engagements; there are a great many books and articles that already do this. Rather, Wert surveys the army's officers, from its commanders down to the regimental level, with a critical eye. Along the way, each and every commander receives a balanced analysis. We see George McClellan ride away from the Glendale battlefield, and understand George Meade's superb handling of the army at Gettysburg. Wert deftly handles the army's numerous command problems, from McClellan's lack of understanding Lincoln's role as commander-in-chief to the many controversies involving subordinate officers who either were incompetent or plotted behind the scenes—William B. Franklin, Joseph Hooker, and Daniel Sickles among them.

Throughout this excellent study, Wert allows the soldiers in the ranks to speak their minds. The author delved through hundreds of their letters and diaries, from which he quotes extensively; reactions to the army's commanders, and comments on supplies, politics, and opponents are abundant. Soldiers also reflected on their retreats from battlefields and wondered why Lee was able to outgeneral their own commanders.

Overall, Jeff Wert has penned an eminently readable, modern study of the North's greatest army. Although some readers will not agree with his analyses of commanders and their operations, *The Sword of Lincoln* is a book that belongs in every Civil War library.

—Rick Sauers  
Williamsport, Pennsylvania

## THE MEMORY OF THE CIVIL WAR IN AMERICAN CULTURE

Edited by Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh (Chapel Hill, 2004. Pp. 286, \$19.95 paper; \$59.95, cloth. ISBN 0-8078-5572-3).

Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh's fascinating collection on Civil War memory explores not only how Americans continue to remember the war, but why. Contributors include two of the field's best known military historians, Gary W. Gallagher and James McPherson, as well as scholars specializing in cultural, political, and social history.

Authors touch on a wide variety of forms that memory takes and chronologically lead readers from the postwar era to the present. Essays emphasize how and why different groups remember and forget selective parts of the war to suit their racial, social, and political identities.



Two essays are particularly noteworthy. LeeAnn Whites' recounts an intriguing story about a stone monument placed at the University of Missouri campus by the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and later removed due to angry protest by African Americans and feminists. Eventually, the rock came to rest outside the county courthouse, where it remains today. In 2001 a new monument was dedicated next to the rock that includes the names of white and some black soldiers from the state. African Americans and whites stood together in memorializing the war. Whites cautiously concludes that, at least for a time, there seemed to be a shift toward more inclusion and less exclusion in this particular community's war memory.

Jon Wiener's essay on the interconnections between the Civil Rights Movement, the Cold War, and the Civil War's centennial celebration also underscores how racially charged Civil War memory can be. By explaining the pressures and problems stirred by the commemoration, Wiener further reminds readers that Civil War memory reflects other historical times and attitudes. In 1963 President John F. Kennedy balked at the idea of openly commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, fearing that such an act would damage his public image among white southerners. Few Americans recall this about Kennedy, a man remembered today as an idealistic president who stood for social justice. The ebb and flow of public memory continues.

—Lesley J. Gordon  
University of Akron

#### FIGHTING WORDS

##### An Illustrated History of Newspaper Accounts of the Civil War

By Andrew S. Coopersmith (New York: The New Press, 2004. Pp. xxii, 325, illus. notes, index, \$35.00, ISBN 1-56584-796-2).

In this modern media age with its twenty-four hour news cycle, it is hard to imagine life in the nineteenth century when people depended on newspapers for the bulk of their information. These papers were a few pages in length, often did not appear daily, and were one-sidedly partisan. Still, they provided people with information, formed and reflected public opinion, and, today, they provide historians with an excellent insight into life in those days. Newspapers are a particularly valuable source for the study of what Americans, North and South, believed as they participated in the greatest crisis of the American democracy, the Civil War.

There have been many other books written about the press during the Civil War, but Andrew Coopersmith, a free-lance historian with a doctoral degree from Harvard, has produced a book that has a different perspective. Where others have analyzed the newsmen themselves and how important leaders felt

about them, Coopersmith's book is an exposition of how the press indicated and molded societal thought.

Coopersmith's approach is to provide long quotations from over eighty northern and southern newspapers, tying these primary sources together with his own unifying and analytical prose. The result is a book that not only gives the general reader an excellent insight into both Union and Confederate thought, but also provides the researcher with a cornucopia of extended direct citations which will no doubt soon find their way into monographs on the war.

As is the case in book after book published about the Civil War, this monograph demonstrates yet again that slavery was at the heart of the war's causation, the way it was or was not fought, and the attitudes that Americans held when it was over. When secession occurred, for example, a Richmond newspaper exclaimed that "Now, a new civilization, new thought, and a new philosophy will rise among us," and "Negro slavery will be its foundation" (49). This centrality of slavery to the Confederacy was re-stated in newspapers throughout the war, as for example when, at the time of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, a Georgia paper said that "negro slavery was the cause of it [the war]. But for this, there would have been no occasion . . . for the disintegration of the Union in 1861" (131).

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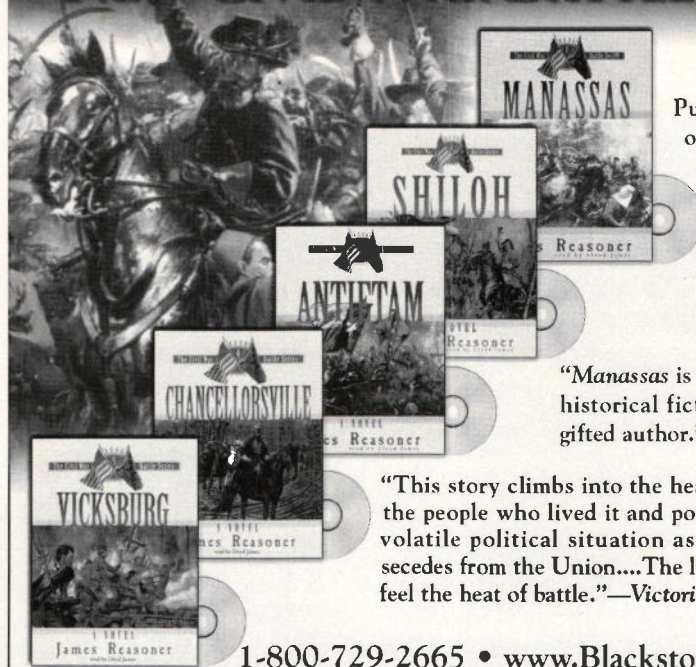
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—John F. Marszalek  
Emeritus, Mississippi State University

## NOW FOR THE CONTEST

### Coastal and Oceanic

#### Naval Operations of the Civil War

By William H. Roberts (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004. Pp. 223, \$39.95, ISBN 0-8032-3861-4).

William Roberts, a retired U.S. Navy commander, is rapidly establishing himself as a major authority on the Civil War at sea. Since 1999 he has published three books on the subject. The first two—*USS Ironsides in the Civil War* and *Civil War Ironclads: The U.S. Navy and Industrial Mobilization in the Civil War*—are fine studies that concentrate on Union ships and ship construction. In his latest book, Roberts undertakes a study of the major campaigns of the war at sea. The work is one of the Great Campaigns of the Civil War series, edited by Anne Bailey and Brooks Simpson, the titles of which are touted as “concise syntheses of the major campaigns of the war, re-

flecting the findings of recent scholarship.” This book lives up to that promise, for it is a fine scholarly overview of the Civil War at sea.

Readers will note from the title, however, that the book does not encompass the entire naval Civil War but concentrates only on the blockade (certainly by far the major Union naval effort of the war), operations on the high seas (Confederate commerce raiding and efforts by Union cruisers to hunt down the Southern ships), and Union amphibious operations along the Confederate coasts. Roberts briefly discusses the organization of the two navies, their equipment, problems facing each, and their leadership and strategies. He stresses the overwhelming advantage at sea (10:1 in manpower alone) enjoyed by the Union navy over the Confederacy and how Southern leaders, most notably Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory, sought to offset crushing Union advantages in ships and manpower by technological innovations such as mines (torpedoes as they were then known) and submarines. He also points out inter-service rivalries and command differences that impeded operations. President Abraham Lincoln gave his cabinet members broad leeway, and this hampered army-navy cooperation.

Roberts treats the often-overlooked role of the Confederate army in coastal defense, and specifically General Robert E. Lee's strategy of defense in depth, but the Union side

never did consider mounting a large-scale land campaign from the sea. Roberts concludes that a major factor in the Union victory was the superiority of Northern military and civilian leadership to their Southern counterparts.

It is hard to fault an author for working within the confines of the assignment, but it is unfortunate that the book does not deal in depth with the very important inland water operations of the U.S. Navy, and thus presents an incomplete picture of the naval war. *Now for the Contest* is short, only 172 pages of text, plus notes and bibliographical essay, but it is very well written, informative, and extensively endnoted. It also contains a number of superb maps and some photographs. Overall, *Now for the Contest* is an excellent introductory survey to the Civil War at sea.

—Spencer C. Tucker  
Lexington, Virginia

## A HANDFUL OF PROVIDENCE The Civil War Letters of Lt. Richard Goldwaite, New York Volunteers, and Ellen Goldwaite

Marti Skipper and Jane Taylor, eds.  
(Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2004. Pp. 280, \$49.95, ISBN 0-7864-1856-7).

The publication of letters and diaries from the Civil War era proceeds apace. Although

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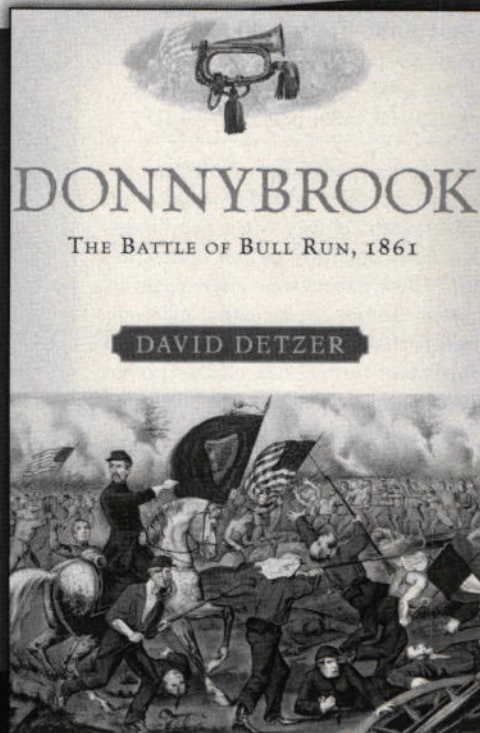
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many important archival collections, not to mention items in private hands, remain unpublished, a large volume of new material rolls off the presses each year. *A Handful of Providence* offers the letters of a New York couple during the first half of the Civil War. Richard and Ellen Goldwaite married in January 1861, and their wartime correspondence reveals much about their relationship and family but not nearly so much about the war itself. Richard served as a second lieutenant in both the 3rd and 99th New York Infantry, but saw little combat.

Despite being a Mexican War veteran, Goldwaite comes off as a decidedly unenthusiastic volunteer who spends a good deal of energy trying to wangle furloughs, and eventually resigns his commission. He becomes especially disillusioned once emancipation becomes a major northern aim. Back home in Rexford, New York, Ellie Goldwaite pleads with Richard to come home, because she quickly loses faith in the Union war effort, and at one point declares half the generals "wholesale murderers" (p. 70). Like many such collections, this one contains a good deal of complaining and speculation about letters not being received. Ellie does not get along well with Richard's family, especially his mother, so descriptions of domestic contretemps fill many pages. Both Richard and Ellie also recounted their dreams in some detail.

The book is very well edited, and the letters themselves present an interesting and somewhat unusual look at mid-nineteenth century marriage from both spouse's perspective, but their value for students of the war is limited. One suspects, however, that Richard and Ellie were more typical of Civil War era couples than those husbands and wives who seemed willing to sacrifice everything for the glorious cause. Given the rather hefty price of this volume, only larger libraries and the most determined collectors of Civil War letters will likely purchase it.

—George C. Rable  
University of Alabama

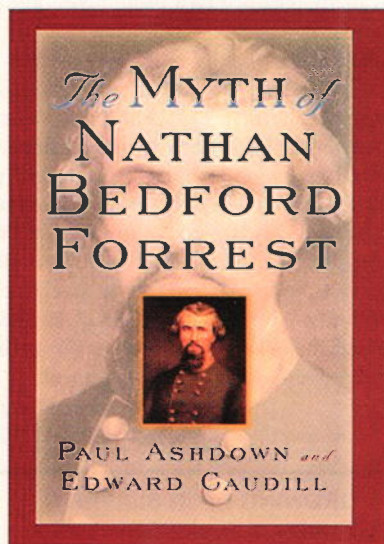
### THE MYTH OF NATHAN BEDFORD FORREST

By Paul Ashdown and Edward Caudill  
(Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005. Pp. 252, \$24.95, ISBN 0-7425-4300-5).

Nathan Bedford Forrest embodies a vast array of images for a number of different people. To some, he remains the symbol of southern intolerance—the cold-blooded murderer of Fort Pillow infamy, a former slave trader who went on to champion the racist bent of the Ku Klux Klan. To others, he is symbolic of frontier individualism and southern virtue—a man who rose from hardscrabble obscurity to a prominent position in the Confederate pantheon through ingenuity and

military genius. Examining the "Forrest Myth not as a shield but a window," Paul Ashdown and Edward Caudill review the entire spectrum of Forrest mythology to "observe the larger political or intellectual agendas that [others have seen] as barriers to understanding one of the most controversial figures in American history."

Essentially, this book looks at Forrest as a case study in myth making. Those interested in the folk tradition will find intriguing the many ways in which the symbolic imagery of an individual can be manipulated to serve a variety of purposes. Seeking to aggrandize southern culture, Agrarians in the 1930s and 1940s, for example, harnessed imagery of Forrest to depict the profound morality of (white) southern men. Forrest, although flawed, was to the Agrarians an ultimately moral man who "forgave and was forgiven." For many, the historical realities of slave trading or the murder of black Union soldiers was "inconsequential in the context of a greater moral lesson."



This part of the authors' argument is fundamentally valid. Forrest's persistent myth, for better or worse, continues to support what are often divergent interpretations of Civil War history. Similarly, the symbolic Forrest can be evoked to support a variety of claims regarding American frontier culture or American individualism. Yet the authors too often exceed their interpretive license. While many historical analyses, political agendas, and cultural themes have been altered by the presence of the controversial Civil War figure, the authors too frequently avoid making conclusive links through primary evidence. Thus, the reader must grapple with awkward parallels (beyond the obvious) to the life of the Forrest Gump character in the 1994 film of the same name. Also, tenuous illustrations of Forrest imagery embedded in interpretations of everything from the war in Vietnam to Islamic Fundamentalism suggest the authors have

simply finessed Forrest into whatever they deemed appropriate to support their assertions.

Those seeking an answer to the riddle of Nathan Bedford Forrest will be left wanting. Although the authors claim, as one component of their argument, to look beyond the "shield" of mythology, their interpretations fail to separate the man from the myth. Similarly, while the authors maintain that a strong connection exists between the mythological Forrest of the past and the present, readers will certainly find many of the connecting strands thin at best.

—M. Keith Harris  
University of Virginia

### CITIES OF THE DEAD Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914

By William Blair (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press) 2004. Pp. 250, \$34.95, ISBN 0-8078-2896-3).

William Blair's study of white and black memorial rites in the South (primarily Virginia) in the five decades after Appomattox is a provocative and fascinating book. The haunting title—*Cities of the Dead*—refers to the burial places of Confederate soldiers that became gathering points for postwar ceremonies honoring the sacrifice and valor of Johnny Reb. Blair excavates the emotional foundations of such occasions and identifies precisely the political motivations that lurked behind the solemn processions and flowery speeches. The book interweaves a compelling narrative of the evolution of white southern "Decoration Days" with that of "Emancipation Days," staged by newly freed African Americans.

In the late 1860s Civil War commemorations were marked by bitterness, grief, and divisive politics. Nowhere was this truer than in the very first white southern ceremonies honoring their dead, called Decoration Days. Directed by Southern women, these gatherings were vetted carefully by northern officials for signs of disloyalty and disrespect to the United States. Blair is hardly the first historian to write about the vigorous public role undertaken by women in the endeavor to remove and re-inter soldiers' bodies from northern cemeteries to southern ones, such as Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond, but he is the first to showcase so thoroughly the struggle for "politics and power" behind the events. For a while, Decoration Days offered the only public venue in which disenfranchised white veterans could openly honor Confederate heroes and at the same time rebuild shattered political alliances. As time advanced, ex-Confederates regained home rule, reconciled with the North, and permanently memorialized the southern version of the war in cemeteries, monuments, books, museums, paintings, and poetry.





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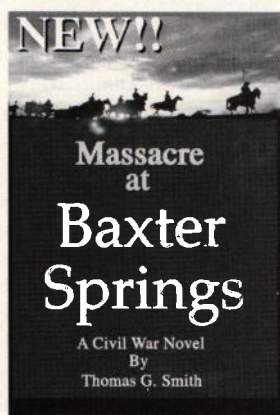
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The story of emancipation celebrations is equally captivating. Black commemorations offered a great contrast to Decoration Days. Instead of mourning the loss of a country, they rejoiced in a country gained. African Americans were proud of the great contribution that black soldiers made in securing the Union victory and of their status as the largest loyal group in the South. Newly enfranchised African American men rightly expected to be rewarded by the Republican Party for that loyalty. Blair shows that emancipation celebrations were political events that increasingly featured speeches and protests over a faltering reconstruction program that ended abruptly in 1877. Along the way many black leaders urged independence from Lincoln's Party and occasionally forged bi-racial coalitions. By the turn of the century, their hopes and dreams for freedom were dashed. Emancipation Days were increasingly less honored than before—in part due to the confusion surrounding an agreed upon date, but mostly due to African American disenchantment with what many regarded as a meaningless anniversary.

Blair shows that by 1914, the year that a huge Confederate monument was dedicated at Arlington national cemetery, white southerners had enshrined securely their narrative of the rise and fall of the Confederacy, commonly called the "Lost Cause." That same year, plans for the fiftieth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation in Richmond fizzled out, due to disinterest in the larger black community. William Blair's *Cities of the Dead* offers a fresh look at the winners and losers in the race to influence history's judgment.

—Joan Waugh

University of California at Los Angeles

### GROWING UP IN SLAVERY Stories of Young Slaves as Told by Themselves

By Yuval Taylor (Lawrence Hill Books,  
Brooklyn, NY: 2005. Pp. 256, \$22.95, ISBN  
1-5565-2548-6).

In *Growing up in Slavery: Stories of Young Slaves as Told by Themselves*, Yuval Taylor has skillfully assembled excerpts from ten former slaves' recollections of their childhood. The writers are a diverse group, from Frederick Douglass to the virtually unknown William H. Robinson, along with Olauda Equiano, Moses Roper, Lewis Clarke, William Wells Brown, Thomas H. Jones, Harriet Jacobs, J. D. Green, and Elizabeth Keckley. Their accounts bring life and human complexity to the history of American slavery. Taylor's writing is clear and succinct, and the narratives are eloquent and accessible. The book also includes moving illustrations by Kathleen Judge.

In the introduction, Taylor usefully places the narratives in historical and literary con-

text. He outlines the history of slavery and emancipation and, focusing on the nineteenth-century popularity of slave narratives, notes that writers sought abolitionism, religious inspiration, self-expression, profit, entertainment, and, after the war, uplift.

*Growing up in Slavery* is an excellent and readable introduction to slavery for younger students. It is not intended as an all-encompassing historical account or analysis, and Taylor observes that the writers do not represent all slaves. But the book does effectively depict experiences and legacies of childhood in bondage. The book is also an interesting example of the relationship between history and memory. Framed as personal memories, the narratives are objects of study themselves.

Taylor introduces each chapter with a brief biography and editorial comment, bridging the primary source material without interrupting the flow of the narratives. Each chapter concludes with a satisfying epilogue. Taylor unobtrusively scatters explanatory notes throughout the text: for example, when Equiano mentions a "windlass," Taylor inserts in brackets, "a barrel around which a rope was tied" (5). Taylor fluidly arranges segments, for example using passages from both of Douglass' antebellum autobiographies.

The chronological and geographical diversity of the accounts underscore the vastness of the American slave experience. Chapters are ordered chronologically, taking the reader from Equiano's experience on an eighteenth-century slave ship to Robinson's contraband experience during the Civil War.

There are graphic descriptions of physical and psychological torture, frequently including the agony of shattered families. Floggings, hunger, death, rape, and loneliness pervade the pages (Taylor provides warning for explicit descriptions at the start of chapters).

But hope also drives the narratives. Alongside slavery's horrors, we see the resilience of individuals. The former slaves describe how they negotiated the boundaries of bondage, like Robinson's learning "to make saliva or crocodile tears" to evoke sympathy from his "mistress" (219). Slaves tell of love, familial support, and determined efforts to read and write.

The narratives are the heart of the book. They provide a glimpse from the slaves' perspectives of daily life, adventures, and crucial historical moments, such as Equiano's first encounter with the "complexions [and] long hair" of Europeans (4). Some readers may feel unsatisfied with the brevity of excerpts, but this allows room to present numerous views of a broadly shared experience. Though the accounts are extracted from longer retrospective works, they do not feel incomplete. Each contains a narrative arc.



The book's premise, of including "stories from [each] writer's life prior to his or her nineteenth birthday," is much more than a gimmick (xxiv). It successfully anchors the work, linking slaves' experiences across decades and miles. This may resonate most with younger students, but it should also fascinate general readers. *Growing up in Slavery* is a gripping introduction to the human side of slavery, rooted in the observations of its youngest witnesses.

—Matt Speiser  
University of Virginia

## WADE HAMPTON

### Confederate Warrior, Conservative Statesman

By Walter Brian Cisco (Washington, DC: Brassey's, Inc., 2004. Pp. xiii, 399, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00, ISBN: 1-57488-626-6).

Wade Hampton, who commanded the cavalry corps of the Army of Northern Virginia in its final months, has needed a modern biography for years. Until now, the most recent full-length treatment of Hampton's life was Manly Wade Wellman's *Giant in Gray*, published more than half a century ago in 1949. That book relied altogether too much on anecdotal tales of Hampton's prowess as a natural leader and of his peerless character without delving too deep into the wellsprings of either. The book under review here is a significant improvement on Wellman's work, but also reflects some of those same characteristics.

The best part of Cisco's new book is his coverage of Hampton's war years. The metamorphosis of Hampton's anachronistic "Legion" into Hampton's brigade illuminates the ad hoc character of Confederate mobilization; Hampton's resentment of J.E.B. Stuart, who was significantly his junior in age as well as social position but who was nevertheless his commanding officer, as well as Hampton's relationship with Robert E. Lee, who handled the touchy Hampton gingerly, illuminate the tension between social standing and military rank in the Confederate army. If Hampton was a high-maintenance subordinate, however, Cisco makes it clear that he was also a conscientious and effective cavalry commander. Moreover, Hampton was no rear-echelon commander. He regularly mixed it up with the troopers and claimed to have killed eleven men personally. Cisco concludes, however, that despite Hampton's success in the field, he never became a professional soldier, remaining essentially a gentleman volunteer throughout the war.

The book takes on a decidedly partisan tone during Cisco's discussion of Sherman's campaign in the Carolinas. Cisco clearly shares his subject's fury at the excesses of Sherman's army in South Carolina. Interestingly, Cisco's footnotes show that he relied more on Michael

Fellman's psycho-biography of Sherman rather than other, mainstream biographies of Uncle Billy, and Cisco's account is dominated by tales of Yankee atrocities from late nineteenth century accounts by outraged southerners.

This partisan tone is especially evident in the section on Reconstruction. Hampton was a key figure in South Carolina's Reconstruction history, a topic that takes up nearly half the book. Cisco appropriately emphasizes Hampton's attempt to include southern blacks in the political process, an effort that pitted southern doctrines of white paternalism against northern efforts to promote black independence. Cisco, however, describes the unfolding events as a kind of morality play in which Hampton is the noble champion of a victimized people who redeems the state from the grasp of evil men. Cisco defends the "restrained intimidation" practiced by southern "rifle clubs" on the grounds that "Revolutionary methods were in order if a revolution was to be effected." By contrast, he characterizes Grant's efforts to suppress the violence of the night riders as "political measures, designed to intimidate Democrats."

It is a bit disappointing that the book stops abruptly with Hampton's death. A final chapter in which Cisco summed up and evaluated Hampton's contributions in both war and peace would have clarified and sharpened his argument.

—Craig L. Symonds  
U.S. Naval Academy

## Crossfire (continued from page 6)

\* \* \*

Whilst reading your extremely interesting piece "The Ten Greatest Blunders of the Civil War" [*North & South*, vol. 8, no. 1], I was struck by the fact that John Simon used Edward A. Pollard of all people as a source to criticize Jefferson Davis. In a day and age when all of the trendy and fashionable historians worship at the altar of the Civil War's holy trinity (Lincoln, Grant, and Sherman) and haughtily scorn anything that has the faintest association with "Lost Cause Mythology," it is nothing short of astonishing to find one of the very authors of this mythology used as a viable source of criticism. What gives?

—Jimmy Price, Richmond, Virginia

JOHN SIMON RESPONDS:

Edward A. Pollard, Richmond editor and author of the first popular history of the Confederacy, also an ardent defender of the "Lost Cause," is hardly the last word in Civil War interpretation. Because Pollard considered Abraham Lincoln a "Yankee monster of inhumanity and falsehood," his condemnation of Jefferson Davis, echoed by many former Confederates and later historians, takes on a special flavor.

## FRANKLIN

I would like to address the account of the death of Lieutenant Colonel Mervin Clark of the 183rd Ohio Volunteers as told in Patrick Brennan's article on the Battle of Franklin ["The Battle of Franklin," *North & South*, vol. 8, no. 1]. His narrative of the event is similar to that found in Wiley Sword's *Embrace An Angry Wind*. Unfortunately, it is not correct. The first time this version of Clark's demise shows up is in an account of the battle by Levi T. Scofield. Captain Scofield was at Franklin and personally knew Clark; however, Scofield did not actually witness Clark's death. His published account of the matter contained inaccuracies. One of the biggest was the place on the field where Clark died. The entire 183rd Ohio was not positioned in the center of Colonel Orlando Moore's brigade. A detachment of fifty men from that regiment was there. Moore himself stated in his official report: "The line occupied by the brigade was so long that I found it impossible to fill it properly with my brigade, and applied to the general commanding the division for more troops, and received a company of fifty men of One hundred and eighty-third Ohio Infantry, which I put in position between the left of Twenty-third Michigan and right of One hundred and twenty-ninth Indiana Infantry, near the center of my line." The Ohioans so positioned bolted, but neither Mervin Clark nor the 183rd's regimental colors were with them.

In his account of the battle, Jacob D. Cox writes: "My own recollection is that about noon I had stopped at the center of the 183rd Ohio, the new regiment on the right of Strickland's second line, to speak to Lieutenant Colonel Clark, who had served in my command at the beginning of the war.... As I recall the situation, the men of the 183rd were then lying down, with no cover except the natural curve of the ground." At the time of the first Confederate assault, the main portion of the 183rd Ohio was positioned behind the 111th Ohio and the 107th Illinois, the first two regiments in Moore's line. After the shooting started, the 183rd moved forward and supported those two regiments. This scenario is verified in several accounts of the battle. The best is an article written by Willard Musson of the 107th that appeared in *The National Tribune* in 1877. Musson relates how the Ohioans continually loaded muskets and passed them forward to be fired by the front ranks.

Colonel George Washington Hoge, who commanded the 183rd Ohio, was on the right. Lieutenant Colonel Mervin Clark was on the left, and was killed trying to lead a countercharge into the breach caused by the Confederate breakthrough. Lieutenant Colonel Isaac Sherwood, in command of the 111th Ohio, knew best what happened to Clark. In *Mem-*



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oires of the War, Sherwood writes: "Three minutes later Colonel Mervin Clark ... was killed. His regiment was on the immediate left of the 111th Ohio and was forced back in the first onslaught. He was a brave soldier of many battles, but his regiment was under fire for the first time. He refused to fall back and stood waving his sword at the left of my regiment. I rushed to his side and yelled in his ears: 'Go back and rally your regiment.' He was shot dead, falling against me."

—Richard A. Rupp  
Wickford, Rhode Island

\* \* \*

For the past few years, virtually everything written about the Battle of Franklin has been merely a regurgitation of the same information from a few modern books on the subject: the same sources, same quotes, same terminology, same characters, and same anti-John Bell Hood interpretation. Legend, folklore, conjecture, and hyperbole have replaced scholarship and full disclosure of historical records. In "The Battle of Franklin" Patrick Brennan parrots the tired myth of an enraged Hood punishing his army by ordering an unnecessary attack against impregnable Union fortifications at Franklin. He not only repeats (perhaps unintentionally) unsubstantiated charges, but his reliance on usual sources ensures the concealment of important historical information.

On eight separate occasions Brennan describes Hood as enraged, using such words as wrathful, angry, maniacal, ire, rash, and furious. Although described by witnesses as angry in the early morning after discovering that his repeated orders to cut the Federal escape had not been fulfilled, Hood was never described as anything but pensive and composed the rest of the day, by the multitude of soldiers and officers who saw or interacted with him. His pre-battle meeting with commanders was reportedly contentious, but eyewitness Sergeant Sumner A. Cunningham wrote of Hood in *Reminiscences of the 41st Tennessee*, "While making ready for the charge, General Hood rode up to our lines, having left his escort and staff in the rear. He remained at the front in plain view of the enemy for, perhaps, half an hour making a most careful survey of their lines... he had now a very trying ordeal to pass through. It was all-important to act, if at all, at once. He rode to Stephen D. Lee, the nearest of his subordinate generals, and, shaking hands with him cordially, announced his decision to make an immediate charge." Like other Hood detractors, Brennan omits such information when trying to paint a sensational image of an infuriated Hood.

Brennan describes Hood's invasion of Tennessee as "quixotic," when it is well known that Jefferson Davis had long desired an invasion of the state. While visiting the Army of Tennessee in Palmetto, Georgia, on September 26, 1864, Davis is reported to have exhorted the troops, "Be of good cheer, for within a short while your faces will be turned homeward and your feet pressing Tennessee soil." Then the following week, while in Augusta, Davis was quoted in the October 4, 1864, issue of the *Constitutionalist* as alluding to the army "treading Tennessee soil" and "pushing on to the Ohio."

Brennan also asserts that Hood "bypassed" department commander General P.G.T. Beauregard when conceiving the invasion. Brennan ignores Beauregard's December 2, 1864, letter to Davis, which outlined the invasion and closed with "after consultation with General Hood, I concluded to allow him to prosecute with vigor his campaign into Tennessee and Kentucky, hoping that by defeating Thomas's army and such other forces as might hastily be sent against him, he would compel Sherman...to repair at once to the defense of Kentucky and, perhaps, Ohio, and thus prevent him from reinforcing Grant. Meanwhile, supplies might be sent to Virginia from Middle and East Tennessee, thus relieving Georgia from the present constant drain upon its limited resources."

Regarding the decision to attack at Franklin, Brennan prefers to attribute Hood's actions purely to anger, rather than inform readers of Hood's own explanation in his post-war memoirs, *Advance and Retreat*: "I here-

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upon decided, before the enemy would be able to reach his stronghold in Nashville, to make that same afternoon another and final effort to overtake and rout him...at Franklin, since I could no longer hope to get between him and Nashville, by reason of the short distance between Franklin and that city...."

Perhaps the best explanation of the necessity of Hood's decision to attack at Franklin was written by Union veteran L.A. Simmons in his postwar memoirs, *The History of the 84th Regiment Illinois Volunteers*: "Could he [Hood] have succeeded in breaking the center, our whole army was at his mercy. In our rear was a deep and rapid river, swollen by recent rains... and to retreat across it an utter impossibility. To break the center was to defeat our army; and defeat inevitably involved a surrender. If this army surrendered to him, Nashville, with all its fortifications, all its vast accumulation of army stores, was at his mercy, and could be taken in a day. Hence, with heavy odds... he made the impetuous attack upon our center, and lost in the momentous game. His army well understood that they were fighting for the possession of Nashville. Ours knew they were fighting to preserve that valuable city, and to avoid annihilation."

Another important eyewitness to Hood's campaign, also censored by Brennan, was Tennessee's exiled Confederate governor Isham Harris, who accompanied the army on the invasion. On December 25, 1864, Harris wrote to Jefferson Davis, "I have been with General Hood from the beginning of this campaign, and beg to say, disastrous as it has ended, I am not able to see anything that General Hood has done that he should not, or neglected anything that he should have done which it was possible to do. Indeed, the more that I have seen and known of him and his policy, the more I have been pleased with him and regret to say that if all had performed their parts as well as he, the results would have been very different."

The Battle of Franklin was so profound and tragic that demons needn't be created to stimulate interest. Modern Civil War scholars should show respect for historiography, and refrain from corrupting history with Hollywood-style fact-filtering and hyperbole.

—Sam Hood, Huntington, West Virginia  
President, John Bell Hood Historical Society

PAT BRENNAN RESPONDS:

I'm afraid Mr. Hood chooses to ignore the vast weight of the historical record in his zeal to defend a failed army commander. To answer what seem to be his salient points:

1) I used words like "wrathy" because they are the words witnesses to his actions used.

2) Mr. Hood's contention that "Hood was never described as anything but pensive and composed the rest of the day" is simply untrue. On the road to Franklin, Isham Harris claimed that Hood publicly censured Ben-

jamin Cheatham, hardly the action of a pensive, composed army commander. Stephen D. Lee found his commander distracted as Hood seemingly forgot to tell Lee to hurry his troops forward. But whether Hood managed to calm down in the course of the day hardly matters. He was terribly angry on the morning of November 30, during which he said to Stephen Lee that if he caught the Yankees before they reached Nashville, he could whip them with Stewart's and Cheatham's corps alone. It was that attitude, that unfounded belief, born in the contentiousness of that morning's meeting in Nathaniel Cheairs' home, that led directly to the bloodbath at Franklin.

3) Mounting a winter campaign with a fractured supply system is the height of quixotism. The fact that Jefferson Davis also thought it a good idea does nothing to change that fact. However, mounting a winter campaign with a fractured supply system that entails an invasion of enemy-held territory makes quixotism look positively stolid.

4) To support one of his points, Mr. Hood uses the words of Sergeant Sumner A. Cunningham, who claims to have seen Hood cordially tell Stephen D. Lee after a half hour viewing of the Federal works that he had decided to make his attack. Mr. Hood then takes me to task for ignoring such information. I would ask Mr. Hood how this information impacts John Bell Hood's decision-making process. Lee arrived as Stewart's and Cheatham's attacks began. The official decision to attack the Federals had been made perhaps an hour earlier. And it was at that meeting (which Lee did not attend—thus explaining Hood's announcement when Lee did arrive) that every one of Hood's subalterns expressed deep reservations about making the attack. Bedford Forrest mounted the most vehement objection to the plan, but all spoke badly of it to Hood's face. Ignoring their well-reasoned objections—all of which proved true—the army commander announced that the Federals would not stand and fight, that they were putting up a brave front and nothing more.

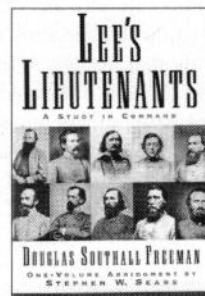
It is simply impossible for John Bell Hood to have come to this conclusion in the short time he stood on Winstead Hill and perused the Federal lines two miles away. The thread between that angry morning meeting and Hood's decision to launch a suicidal attack is obvious.

At this point, it is instructive to let John Bell Hood describe his "discovery" of his army's seeming weakness: "The discovery that the Army, after a forward march of one hundred and eighty miles, was still, seemingly, unwilling to accept battle unless under the protection of breastworks, caused me to experience grave concern. In my inmost heart I questioned whether or not I would ever succeed in eradicating this evil. It seemed to me I

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had exhausted every means in the power of one man to remove this stumbling block to the Army of Tennessee."

Quickly, Hood reveals his decision-making process: "I hereupon decided, before the enemy would be able to reach his stronghold at Nashville, to make that same afternoon another and final effort to overtake and rout him."

In his letter, Mr. Hood cherry picked the latter quote.

John Bell Hood admits candidly that the Confederate failure at Spring Hill had shown him an "evil" in his army that needed to be eradicated. And what was this evil? His army's unwillingness "to accept battle unless under the protection of breastworks." He believes he

has done everything he can "to remove this stumbling block." So, after a brief reconnaissance, Hood decides to launch two corps across a vast open plain at a mass of well-constructed, well-defended earthworks, studded with artillery, lined with infantry. Hood himself has made the connection between the evil he has discovered in his army and his tonic of attacking earthworks. Neither myself nor any other writer needs to invent this connection. It is right there in Hood's reminiscences.

No matter how many instances Mr. Hood can find of John Bell Hood cordially shaking hands, the simple fact remains that General Hood decided early that morning that he was going to attack the Federals if, when, and where he found them. He ignored the advice of his

subalterns. He made no concerted reconnaissance that would have revealed the weakness on the Federal right flank. His dispositions were faulty. He had bare artillery support. But he had discovered an "evil" permeating his army that needed eradicating. And attacking the Federal defenses head-on would be the cure.

On December 1 an Alabama officer reported that Hood told some of Cheatham's men, "You would not catch the Yankees when I wanted you to. Now you shall fight them wherever you find them." If Mr. Hood read the rest of my article, he would be aware of the extraordinary sacrifice Cheatham's men had made the day before. Perhaps Mr. Hood can answer the question: What kind of commander says this sort of thing to men who have just spent an eternity in the maelstrom of the Battle of Franklin? I would encourage Mr. Hood to seek out Major J.W.A Wright's reminiscence of Franklin and Nashville (*The New Annals of the Civil War*, Mechanicsburg, 2004: pp. 468-87).

Mr. Hood believes that I am little more than a parrot for a cabal of John Bell Hood bashers, prone to "Hollywood-style fact-filtering" and "hyperbole." He's of course entitled to his opinion. However, I've found insults to be of little worth. And nothing Mr. Hood has said makes me think any differently of John Bell Hood. If he's planning on changing 140 years of thinking about the man by accusing the general's detractors of carousing with starlets, then I would advise him to try another tack.

#### THE CONFEDERATE MIND

I would like to commend Mr. [Daniel] Jackson for his letter [in "Crossfire," *N&S*, vol. 8, no. 1, about Chandra Manning's "Our Liberties and Institutions: What Union and Confederate Soldiers Thought the Civil War was About," *N&S*, vol. 7, no. 6] regarding Dr. Manning's conclusions on what Confederate soldiers thought. In fact I think Manning was a bit hard on him [Manning's response to Jackson's letter, "Crossfire," *N&S*, vol. 8, no. 1], and I believe I can help her understand what he was saying. So what can a modern-day Yankee tell us about the Confederate mind? I can tell you that I have lived south of the Mason-Dixon line as well as north and have had the opportunity to learn why a "Western" Virginia man would fly a Confederate flag above his home and the next family down the road would fly the Stars and Stripes and so-on. It is because of this that I know that you cannot learn about Southern history from a Yankee.

The institution of owning slaves in the South was no different than the corporate greed behind the mistreatment of white immigrant labor in the North. In fact, your average Southerner had heard of the terrible work conditions, low pay, and injury rate (not to mention job instability) and had come to the



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conclusion that its institution offered a much better deal; a job plus benefits and a home for life and thus the purity of its cause. By instituting a source of labor that is sanctioned by the Bible and practiced by civilizations for centuries, Southerners had come to despise what the North stood for most: change for the worse.

So what was going on in the average Confederate private's mind—absolutely nothing concerning slaves. Your average rural young man was looking for something that we still look for today. To be a part of something big and to do something they were proud that their grandfathers participated in—the independence of their country. There is no doubt that the average young man resented the actual slaveowning few for drawing them into a life-threatening situation. In fact there was most likely a line drawn between enlisted men and some of their (slaveowning) officers on this account. It is the Yankee invader that bound southerners—enlisted, officer, and citizen—to the single common cause and that was to drive the Yankees (and the change they represented) out of their state, their country.

It is unfortunate that it is the victor that writes history, and in many cases rewrites it. It is also unfortunate how 150 years and a fixation with cultural cleansing (or political correctness for the rest of you) can distort fact. I can only imagine what students will be learning about the South and its loss in another 150 years. I thank God that the truth exists out there somewhere, and it's a southerner I truly thank for helping me find it. So I say to Dr. Manning, one modern-day Yankee to another, what do you really know about the Old South anyway?

—Christopher Malouf  
Boston, Massachusetts

#### HOWARD'S "INTENT"

An article entitled "General Meade and the Second Battle of Gettysburg" by Stephen Sears [*North & South*, volume 8, number 1] included a curious passage: "On that bloody 1st of July, to conceal his own inept leadership of the XI Corps, the newly demoted Howard laid blame for the final Federal collapse in the day's fighting on the other Union corps involved, the I Corps. This was exactly contrary to fact—it was the rout of Howard's XI Corps that precipitated the collapse, and it was the I Corps that held out to the last ditch." And later: "However, the aspersions cast on the I Corps by Howard (passed on to Meade by Hancock) provoked Meade to make a change. He promptly displaced Doubleday...."

While I do not deny that this may possibly be an accurate description of what happened, I question the rationale and presentation of these passages.

If O.O. Howard's leadership was inept, it was inept for his entire command; he was in

command of both the I and XI Corps upon the death of John Reynolds (Abner Doubleday commanded the I Corps and Carl Schurz commanded the XI Corps). It seems that any shifting of blame on Howard's part as described by the author would have been from Howard to, well, Howard. Even so, while Doubleday may appear a likely direction in which to deflect blame, Howard never admitted, then or later, to a collapse of any part of his command, I or XI Corps. In his eyes it would appear there was no blame to shift.

The author has read much into one sentence written by Winfield Scott Hancock: "Howard says that Doubleday's command gave way." Doubleday's command most surely gave way; otherwise it is difficult to account for its presence on Cemetery Hill and Culp's Hill at the end of the day. The sentence did not contain the term more commonly employed in those days to describe the less than stellar performance of a unit—"broke"—nor the more damning "broke and ran." The sentence is indeed true. And it should not be forgotten that it was Hancock who authored the offending dispatch. Nowhere does Hancock mention what Howard may have said about the XI Corps, and if Hancock did not ask for such information, Meade's faith in his lieutenant's abilities was surely misplaced. It is very possible, and given the timing likely, that Howard's verbal report to Hancock was much the same as in his own 5:00 p.m. dispatch to Meade, the only contemporary documentation of Howard's thoughts:

GENERAL: General Reynolds attacked the enemy as soon as he arrived, with one division, about 10.45 a.m. He moved to the front of the town, driving in the enemy's advance for about half a mile, when he met with a strong force of A. P. Hill's corps. I pushed on as fast as I could by a parallel road; placed my corps in position on his right. General Reynolds was killed at 11.15 a.m. I assumed command of the two corps, and sent word to Slocum and Sickles to move up. I have fought the enemy from that time till this. The First Corps fell back, when outflanked on its left, to a stronger position, when the Eleventh Corps was ordered back, also to a stronger position. General Hancock arrived at 4 p.m., and communicated his instructions. I am still holding on at this time.

If one were so inclined, one could I suppose interpret the above to imply that the XI Corps fell back in a more orderly fashion than the I Corps, but there is nothing to suggest that this did not represent Howard's understanding of the facts at the time, and certainly nothing that could be termed an "aspersion" cast on the I Corps. It is apparent that had Howard made this identical report to



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Hancock, Hancock would not have been incorrect in his very brief summation of Howard's report relative to the actions of "Doubleday's command." The sentence was true, but perhaps incomplete. Nowhere was it recorded exactly what Howard said to Hancock, let alone why he may have said it.

One might ask, Why would Hancock include such a vague statement at all? Why would he not have included any comment on 11th Corps? Why indeed. Could Meade, whose pre-

battle relationship with Doubleday was anything but warm and trusting (in a letter to his wife on January 23, 1863, Meade said, "Doubleday has been assigned to the Reserves, which is a good thing for me, for now they will think a great deal more of me than before"), have possibly related his lack of confidence in Doubleday to Hancock, and advised that he would not hesitate in replacing him? This would certainly not be inconsistent with either Meade's personality or his actions, as evidenced by his dispatching of Hancock to supersede Howard, whom the author says Meade considered "a weak reed." Why would Meade have made such an important personnel decision at such a critical time based solely on one cryptic sentence attributed to this "weak reed"? One might conclude that the guilty parties in this case were Hancock and Meade, with both Doubleday and Howard the victims—Doubleday himself concluded the same in his testimony before the Joint Congressional Committee on the Conduct of the War. This might to some seem more likely than the notion that Hancock and Meade were mere pawns in a chess game engineered by a suddenly Machiavellian Howard. However, if an author would conclude the above in a published piece, I think sources would need to be cited, and the editorial nature of the comment identified.

Rationale issues aside, I am most concerned with the author's failure to cite sources for his assertion that "to conceal his own inept leadership of the XI Corps, the newly demoted Howard laid blame for the final Federal collapse in the day's fighting on the other Union corps involved, the I Corps." The statements concerning both Howard's intent and motivation can be nothing but conjecture on the author's part, since they do not appear to be supported by documentary evidence and are disputed by Howard himself (see *The National Tribune*, November 27, 1887, in which Howard addresses claims made by the Comte de Paris). Any author is certainly entitled to his opinion; otherwise we would not have 70,000 some odd pieces written on our Civil War. However, when an author makes assertions that are actually opinions not supported by documentary evidence and especially when contradicted by the same, the interpretation should be clearly identified as such. There have been far too many instances where I have checked an author's citation for similar assertions only to discover that the source was purely another author's opinion which was not properly noted, and this is what I perceive as the real danger. Had Mr. Sears identified this as opinion I would not have felt compelled to bring the matter to your attention, as it is an opinion that has been expressed by others, if similarly unconvincingly. For example, Bill Hyde, in *The Union Generals Speak*, presented it thus: "Howard's comment to Hancock about Doubleday's troops could well have been intended to deflect questions about what happened to be the second (Chancellorsville being the first) dismal showing of the Eleventh Corps." While I might disagree with this rationale as well, I have no problem with the presentation.

Perhaps Mr. Sears has some documentary evidence that convincingly supports his assertion, and simply failed to cite it in this article or in his book, *Gettysburg* (that work cites Hancock's and Howard's dispatches to Meade and a post-war letter from Doubleday to Bates). If so, I am most interested in seeing it. Even if no substantive support for the legend surfaces, I think Howard's torpedo, along with Buford's repeaters and Heth's shoes, will remain one of the more enduring romances of the Battle of Gettysburg.

—Harry Smeltzer  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

STEPHEN SEARS RESPONDS:

My purpose in sketching Howard's role on July 1 at Gettysburg was simply to explain Doubleday's animus toward Meade in his subsequent congressional committee testimony. Doubleday believed he had been unjustly displaced as rightful commander of the I Corps (and, worse, by an officer junior to

## DO YOU KNOW? ANSWERS

(Questions are on page 11)

1. U. S. Grant—150 feet tall.
2. Chickamauga, with more than 34,000 combined casualties.
3. Brigadier General William Hays, on April 6, 1865, by Major General Andrew A. Humphreys, his corps commander.
4. Patrick Cleburne.
5. Williamsburg, Virginia.
6. Colonel John T. Wilder, at Munfordsville, Kentucky, on September 17, 1862. Wilder went out under a flag of truce to seek the advice of Buckner, who took him on a tour of Confederate lines. Duly convinced of the rebels' superiority, Wilder surrendered his garrison of 4,000 men.

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him) and blamed Meade for this blatant disrespect.

In taking this action, however, Meade was misled by Howard. That is no airy conjecture, as Mr. Smeltzer supposes. There is context to the documentary evidence—the dispatches to Meade by Howard and by Hancock—that resulted in Doubleday's replacement.

Howard's 5:00 p.m. dispatch, like all his dispatches that July 1, seriously underreported the Union situation: "The First Corps fell back, when outflanked on its left, to a stronger position [Cemetery Hill], when the Eleventh Corps was ordered back, also to a stronger position." That's not what happened, of course; there is abundant eyewitness evidence that the XI Corps broke first, leaving the I Corps stranded on Seminary Ridge. Then came Hancock's 5:25 p.m. dispatch: the offending line "Howard says that Doubleday's command gave way" stands out as a one-sentence paragraph at the end of Hancock's account, not to be overlooked. Combine that with Howard's assertion that the I Corps "fell back" first, and Meade had evidence enough to demote Doubleday. Only later did Doubleday learn that what he called this "baleful intelligence" about the I Corps was furnished by Howard.

Mr. Smeltzer wants to know Howard's motivation. Not to put too fine a point on it, it was to protect his ass. In the eyes of the Army of the Potomac, Howard's XI Corps had run at Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg looked like a repeat performance. Howard was mortified. He admitted to Doubleday, in a postwar conversation, that he had feared Meade would relieve him on the spot. "This is Howard's own statement," Doubleday wrote to Samuel Bates in 1874 (Pennsylvania State Archives), "made to me at the Astor House in the parlor on the third floor where we had a quiet talk in regard to Gettysburg."

What Mr. Smeltzer calls "Howard's torpedo" does not rate as one of the romances of Gettysburg.

### CHAMBERLAIN & GETTYSBURG

I have been an avid reader of *North & South* since you launched your magazine. I have been wondering why you have not done a story about the truth of Colonel Joshua L. Chamberlain and the 20th Maine Infantry. There has been a lot of controversy over his actions at Little Round Top at Gettysburg on July 2, 1863. You guys have done an article on just about everyone who fought in the Civil War. Your stories and articles are well written and followed up with pictures and maps, making it easy for anyone to read and understand what is going on. I just want to know if you will follow up with a story on Chamberlain and his men and solve the ongoing question: Did he really lead the charge down the slope of Little Round Top and cap-

ture about 400 prisoners of war? Some historians say he did and others say no. There is nothing worse than history being distorted (or exaggerated).

—Mario Maggiolo, via email

Ed. Mario, you might be glad to know that our next issue—a special devoted entirely to the Battle of Gettysburg—will include an article on the Chamberlain myth by Glenn LaFantasie. For the rest of the special issue's lineup, see page 57.

## Knapsack

(continued from page 11) age was slightly over twenty-five, almost precisely the same as that of white recruits. Although the state offered the usual bonuses to encourage enlistment, the men who signed up certainly had a more serious incentive to enlist than money. As one soldier of the 31st USCT later said, while serving in the lines before Petersburg, "we know, and the slave knows . . . that fighting for the Union is fighting against slavery."

As with all black regiments, the officers were largely white, usually veterans of older regiments. For example, Colonel Nelson B. Bertram of the 2nd USCT had been lieutenant colonel of the 17th New York, while his second-in-command, Lieutenant Colonel A. E. Mather, had served in the 121st New York, and at least four of the company commanders in the 20th USCT were veterans of the 44th New York. These were men who had seen the war up close, from the Seven Days' through Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg. Aside from chaplains George W. LeVere and Benjamin F. Randolph, both of New York City, there appears to have been only one African-American officer in any of these regiments, Second Lieutenant James B. Schermerhorn of the 20th USCT, commissioned on July 22, 1864, though he does not seem to have actually served with the regiment.

The regiments were organized and trained on either Hart Island or Riker's Island, located in the East River between what is now Queens and the Bronx. The two islands had been the sites of coast defense installations for generations, and were common rendezvous for new regiments being formed in the New York metropolitan area.

Now, a few notes on New York's USCT regiments:

**The 20th USCT.** The 20th USCT was the regiment authorized in December 1863. As was the case for many African-American regiments, the recruits of the 20th USCT were treated to varying degrees of discrimination. For example, the adjutant general scrimped on their recruiting bonuses, which were often not paid in any case, nor would he pay the bonus due recruiting officers, so that the Union League Club had to make up the dif-

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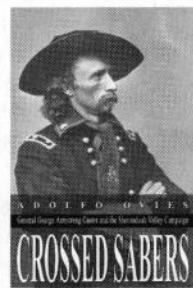
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ference. There were also charges that some men were enlisted under fraudulent circumstances. Quarters and equipment were initially poor, a common problem affecting new recruits, whether white or black, and the regiment was armed with the standard Springfield '61 musket, rather than imported surplus weapons or relics.

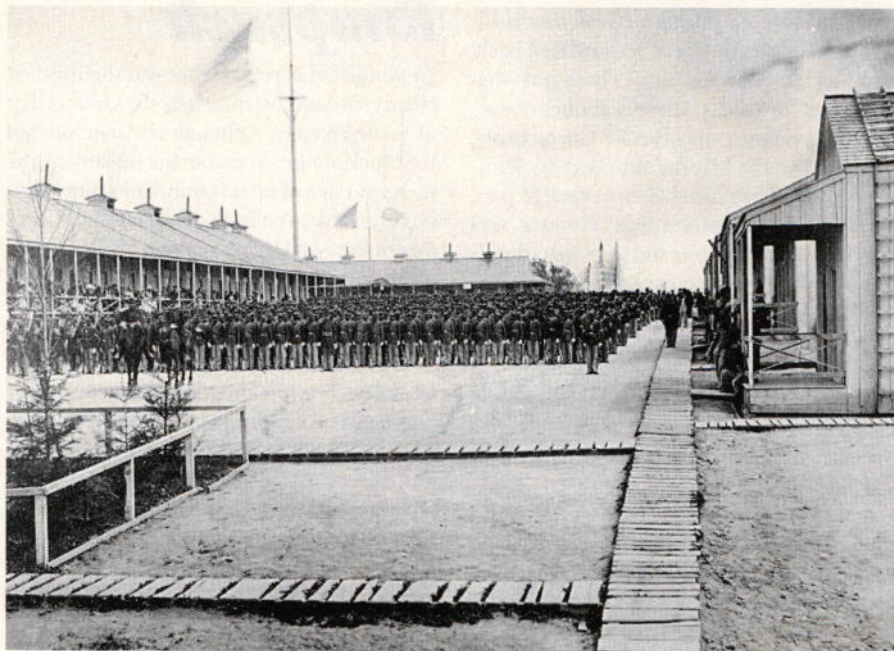
Organized and trained on Riker's Island under Colonel Nelson B. Bertram, the regiment was mustered in on February 9, 1864, 1,325 strong. While it was common in many white regiments for a large proportion of the troops to be foreign born, the 20th was one of the few black regiments to have a large foreign born contingent; 101 men, almost ten percent of its strength. Of these, the largest group, sixty-two, were British North Americans (i.e., Canadians). There were also some men from the West Indies and Latin America (it was not unusual for Latin American and even Asian men to serve in black regiments).

On March 4, 1864, the regiment was presented with its colors by Charles King, the president of Columbia College, at a formal parade before an enormous crowd—by some estimates as many as 100,000—gathered in Union Square, as the band of the famed 7th Regiment provided suitably martial airs (civilian bandmen had refused to play for the "coloreds"). The 20th then marched "down Broadway, armed, drilled, truculent, and elate," to use the words of George Templeton Strong, an inveterate diarist and letter writer who was one of the city's most notable Republicans, to take ship for the Department of the Gulf.

The 20th USCT had a tedious war. From late March 1864 until the end of the conflict, the regiment performed garrison and occupation duties in the Department of the South, mostly in the vicinity of New Orleans, but with occasional movements to Texas and Florida. Save for a minor skirmish near Port Hudson (April 7, 1864), the regiment seems never to have been under fire. The 20th USCT was mustered out at Nashville on October 7, 1865, by which time it had lost one enlisted man to wounds, plus two officers and 282 enlisted men from other causes.

**The 26th USCT.** Authorized in January 1864 and formed on Riker's Island under Colonel William B. Guernsey, the regiment was mustered into federal service on February 27, 1864, 1,230 strong. Although foul weather caused the cancellation of a gala send-off such as had been accorded the 20th USCT, by April the regiment was in the Department of the South, where it spent the balance of the war. Until November 1864 the regiment performed garrison duties at Beaufort. It was then transferred to a mobile brigade, and took part in the expedition to Johns and James Islands in July, being engaged in a number of skirmishes as part of the operations against Battery Pringle. In November the regiment fought at Honey

Hill, and then in several skirmishes during operations against the Charleston & Savannah Railroad in December, including Deveaux's Neck, before being returned to garrison duty at Beaufort. The 26th USCT, one of several regiments to have its own Masonic Lodge, holding a charter from the Prince Hall Masons, was mustered out of federal service on August 28, 1865, having lost two officers and twenty-eight enlisted men killed or mortally wounded and three officers and 112 enlisted men dead of disease or other causes.



At Camp William Penn, Pennsylvania, men of the 26th U.S. Colored Infantry form for review in 1865.

**The 31st USCT.** Organized and trained on Hart Island during April 1864 under the command of Colonel Henry C. Ward, the regiment mustered into federal service on April 29 with 1,211 officers and men, about a third of whom were credited to Connecticut. Shipped to Annapolis, Virginia, on May 18, the regiment absorbed the four companies of the incomplete 30th Connecticut Volunteers (African Descent), formed at Fair Haven the previous March.

Attached to the IX Corps, the 31st USCT helped guard the supply trains of the Army of the Potomac during May 1864, took part in the operations around Cold Harbor early in June, and then the siege of Petersburg and Richmond. The regiment was present at the Battle of the Crater in July, the operations against the Weldon Railroad in August, the fighting for Fort Sedgwick in September, and that along Hatcher's Run in October. At the end of 1864 the 31st USCT was assigned to Major General Godfrey Weitzel's XXV Corps, which was composed largely of black troops. Continuing in the siege lines, the regiment took part in the Appomattox Campaign, fighting at Hatcher's Run on March 29-31,

entered Petersburg on April 2, and helped pursue the Army of Northern Virginia, forming part of the forces that blocked Lee's retreat on April 8. One of the units present at Lee's surrender the next day, the regiment spent a few weeks on occupation duty in Virginia, and was then moved to Texas, where it formed part of Phil Sheridan's army of observation stationed along the Rio Grande to suggest to the French that they should leave Mexico. The 31st USCT mustered out on November 7, 1865, having lost three officers and forty-eight enlisted men killed in action

or dead of wounds, six enlisted men shot by Confederate troops while prisoners-of-war, and one officer and 117 enlisted men dead of other causes.

\* \* \*

As was the case with most of the black regiments that served, for the 20th, 26th, and 31st USCT the war was mostly one of hard fatigues and tedious garrison duty. In fact, during the war a black New York regiment participated in only one major action, the Battle of the Crater (July 31, 1864), two if one counts Honey Hill (November 30, 1864) as a major action. In any case, both were ill-conceived and badly executed operations that resulted in defeat. But African-American troops performed well on both occasions. As one veteran of the 31st USCT put it, "They did their duty, and that bravely."

The military history of Riker's Island and Hart Island is today commemorated by a number of small markers, though it is unlikely that many of those who chance to be on either island notice them, for Riker's is now the site of New York City's principal "correctional facility" and Hart of its "potter's field." □





## FIELD REPORT

Robert Lee Hodge

### Shiloh and Corinth: A Diamond, and a Diamond in the Rough.

I first traveled to Shiloh National Military Park in March 1978, when I was eleven years old. The name Shiloh had resonated with me, even at that early age, from books and historical movies I had seen. Although I was ignorant (and really still am) about the minutiae of troop movements and soldiers involved in that fight, I had felt the importance of the place.

On that overcast day I saw Bloody Pond, the Sunken Road, and the Peach Orchard, wondering what it must have been like to have participated in the battle. I was further hooked on the place after watching the 1950s-era interpretive film at the Shiloh visitors' center.

At Shiloh over 100,000 Union and Confederate soldiers clashed, resulting in 24,000 casualties. Obviously the battle was no small affair, and thankfully four thousand acres of this hallowed ground is protected—roughly seventy percent of the battlefield.

Back then, full of naivete, I had assumed that all major Civil War battlefields were akin to Shiloh—respected and protected. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

Rarely does one see National Park Service (NPS) battlefields, like Shiloh, substantially intact. Consider another Tennessee treasure—Stones River National Battlefield—for an education on preservation, or more importantly the lack thereof. At this park only fifteen percent of its historic landscape is protected by the federal government. The combination of the NPS' poor funding by Congress, and inept planning on the part of a local pro-sprawl government, has made Stones River battlefield protection practically impotent.

One place where local government and the NPS have recently integrated a pro-preservation stance is at Shiloh's nearby neighbor—Corinth, Mississippi. The Corinth Civil War Interpretive Center (a unit of Shiloh National Military Park) is an impressive 9.5 million dollar facility that hopes to attract 250,000 visitors in its first year of operation. "I'm really pleased with the interpretive center," says Rosemary Williams, an activist and chairman of the Siege and Battle of Corinth Commission, an organization that has to date protected nine hundred acres.

"Industry is not just smokestacks. Tourism is an industry too. It has been hard at times to get that message across, but we have been successful in Corinth," says Del Horton, executive director of the Corinth Area Tourism Promotion Council. "People are more cognizant of what they have in their backyard nowadays. They know what it is and they take care of it."

So why is Corinth important? Following the triumph at Shiloh the Union army moved toward its objective twenty-two miles away—Corinth—an important railroad hub. In May 1862 the siege of Corinth began, with roughly 185,000 troops involved. The Union high command felt that the railroad center at Corinth was as important to capture as Richmond, Virginia, and therefore had to be taken at all hazards; Confederate general P.G.T. Beauregard remarked that if Corinth was lost the war was lost. After a series of battles the four-week siege ended with a Confederate evacuation.



In October of that same year the rebels attempted to recapture Corinth, but were forced to retreat, leaving 7,000 casualties in their wake. It was one of at least five offensives that contributed to what most historians would agree was the true High-Tide of the Confederacy.

Union victories at Corinth, Antietam, and Perryville set the stage for Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and helped prevent the British and French governments from recognizing the Confederacy.

Recently, thanks to the help of Rosemary Williams, Corinth's government realized that their history could be a huge tourist attraction, if managed properly. "If it weren't for

Rosemary a lot that has occurred here would not have happened. She has been the driving force since day one," says Horton. Williams states, "Our history is causing a renaissance. The community is seeing the big picture and cooperating in promoting a tourism economy."

What is on the horizon? In the words of Woody Harrelson, Shiloh's superintendent, "The NPS resource study identified eighteen sites at Corinth. Up to 8,000 acres could be saved, which would protect the battlefields, the earthworks, and view-sheds." However, the NPS recommendation was to acquire smaller acreage, and look for partnerships, as opposed to big purchases. The local community would like to see a more ambitious plan than what was mentioned in the study—thus creating a larger authorized boundary. Says Harrelson, "It will be up to Congress to decide what the future of the NPS at Corinth will be." Hope-

fully, Congress will allocate funds for such an ambitious project before bulldozers can get to the earthworks.

After all, without Shiloh's battlefield protected by our federal government, hundreds of thousands of dollars a year would not be generated from heritage tourism to help stimulate the local economy.

Thankfully, the added attraction for the modern-day visitor to Shiloh is Corinth. For me, though, I still am compelled by that ancient 1950s interpretive film; it is what pulls me to Shiloh.

For more information on the preservation efforts at Corinth and Shiloh go to [www.corinth.net](http://www.corinth.net) and [www.nps.gov/shil/](http://www.nps.gov/shil/)

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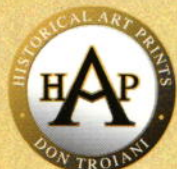
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